



North End Connection

The Newsletter of the Creston Neighborhood Association

Summer 2012

Construction begins on Plainfield

By: Pete Tabberer

A massive construction project has begun on Plainfield Ave through the heart of the Creston business district. The project, which began on June 11 and is scheduled for completion on August 25, involves resurfacing from Leonard to Ann, utility improvements and the eagerly awaited bio-retention islands.

The seven bio-retention islands are being installed thanks to our local business community. Creston businesses spearheaded an effort to raise over \$128,000 to match a grant from the Michigan Department of Transportation.

The islands will beautify the ar-

ea, increase pedestrian and traffic safety and help protect the environment by filtering stormwater. The bio-retention islands are the first of their kind to be installed in Grand Rapids.

The project will be completed in two phases. Phase one is currently under way and is scheduled for completion about July 7. Phase two will begin about July 7 and run through August 25.

Construction of course means detours. Maps of the detour routes can be found on page 5. Local businesses will be accessible throughout the construction, don't forget to support our neighborhood shops and restaurants!



Photo by: Pete Tabberer
Road crews began putting out detour signs several days before construction began.

The North Quarter: It's Official!

By: Deborah Eid

CNA's organizing work has created another successful collaboration!

On May 15 city commissioners voted unanimously to formally approve the North Quarter Corridor Improvement District, which gives a special property tax capture status to the area.

It also creates a local leadership board for an area encompassing 188 businesses and several blocks of residential homes in the Cheshire, Creston and North Monroe areas.

The board consists of a group of



nominees from area businesses, a resident and our Second Ward City Commissioner Ruth Kelly.

Over the next few months the project list from last year's consensus meetings will be formally approved and made part of city record.

The consistent leadership of

CNA in this process has been key. From 2003 to 2006 neighbors began the work of developing the Creston corridor, with several key projects.

The tiled benches on corners throughout Creston were done as our first public art project with Creston High School.

Another outgrowth of that period was the creation of the Creston Car Show, originally staffed by CNA and now entering its 8th year under the leadership of CarStar Collision.

See: North Quarter pg. 2

The Urban Orchard Project

By: Caroline

Have you taken a walk through Riverside Park lately and wondered about the new grove of seedlings planted at the north end of the park?

The Urban Forest Project is a new initiative led by Friends of Grand Rapids Parks partnering with the city of Grand Rapids.

The project's key focus is to engage community members in planting and growing a vibrant and healthy urban forest. The trees in Riverside Park launched the project in partnership with the Lions Club, with a planting of 113 trees (11 varieties).

One goal of the Urban Forest Project is to increase the tree canopy within the city to 40%.

To make this 40% mark, nearly

200,000 trees will need to be planted. This ambitious goal is not just to beautify the city, though it will definitely do that. An increased tree canopy is an attractive way to deal with very practical problems, like keeping water out of the storm drains. This will help to keep pollution out of our waterways and ultimately out of our drinking water. Trees also sequester carbon and clean the air. They also lower energy usage when planted around homes or businesses.

Another exciting aspect of the Urban Forest Project is the Citizen Tree Map, a crowd-sourced educational tree map in which individuals in the community will be able to enter information about specific trees, upload photos, learn how to identify various tree species, and more.

Watch for more information and calls for community engagement on this project, aimed at improving the environmental health of our city and neighborhood.

Every tree counts. Have you thought about planting a tree in your yard?



Photo by: Pete Tabberer

This Grove of saplings was planted in northern Riverside Park as part of the Urban Forest project.

North Quarter: cont. from pg. 1

In 2007 we organized partners and participation, fundraised and paid for the two important planning documents which form the backbone of the North Quarter Corridor Improvement District (CID) proposal presented this year.

From 2008 to 2009 we fundraised and recruited artists to do three public art murals along Plainfield Ave.

Beginning in 2010 the process accelerated with increased participation by area businesses in the planning and decision making around how best to move towards the goals set in the 2007 planning documents.

By Fall of 2010 we had a steering committee and in April 2011 debuted our North Quarter name and logo.

Moving now on a fast track we have in the last year changed the proposal to an approved plan and in parallel quick step will bring a major beautification effort to fruition as the bio-retention islands are installed this summer.




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A busy year at the community gardens

By: Andrea Hensen

Summer is fast approaching at Creston Community Gardens and we are excitedly awaiting the continued growth spurts of seedlings.

In addition to growing plants we are starting to see new partnerships develop and gardeners building community through daily interactions.

The Carrier Street Garden was hit hard with the hungry appetite of ground hogs this year, however, gardeners have proved to be more than resilient; setting live traps, installing barrier fences around their plots, and researching natural methods for pest control.

With the exit of our ground hog community we are excited about some new communities we have welcomed into the Gardens this year. At the Carrier location we have established partnerships with the WISEWOMAN (WW) Entrepreneurial Gardening Project, Hope Network, and ARC Kent County.

The WW program is in partnership with MSU Extension Educators and master gardeners who provide training to project participants on nutrition, gardening basics, and gain skills in entrepreneurship.

Hope Network, which provides individuals with a developmental disability with supportive community involvement, has rented two

raised garden beds in the gardens.

Residents have planted a variety of vegetables, and, an asset to the pollination of all our plants in the garden, an entire plot full of flowers that attract bees.

ARC Kent County, an organization that advocates for the rights and full participation of all people with developmental disabilities, is currently seeking out gardening enthusiasts to be paired with our gardening community.

If you are interested in connecting with this partnership contact Andrea at crestoncommunitygardens@gmail.com or (616) 755-8619. These partnerships are allowing the garden to be more effective as it was built with these participants in mind.

At the Carman Street Garden we have started to connect with neighborhood kids. Some kids have their own mini garden plots and others have been helping weed, plant and water generally throughout the garden.

The children in the Plainfield United Methodist Church Sunday School program have been tending



Photo by: Andrea Hensen

The fourth groundhog caught at the Carrier Street Garden. It was released into the wild near 4 mile and Plainfield.

a plot of their own as well, learning about God's creation with their hands.

The space overall is becoming more and more welcoming of neighbors. We are seeing the garden mission starting to be fulfilled as children become more aware of where their food comes from and how to grow it themselves.

Continued partnerships, established last year, with Artists Creating Together (formerly the Very Special Arts) and special education students from Creston High School continue to thrive. It is exciting to see all of these different groups come together around gardening, being outdoors, and learning about food.

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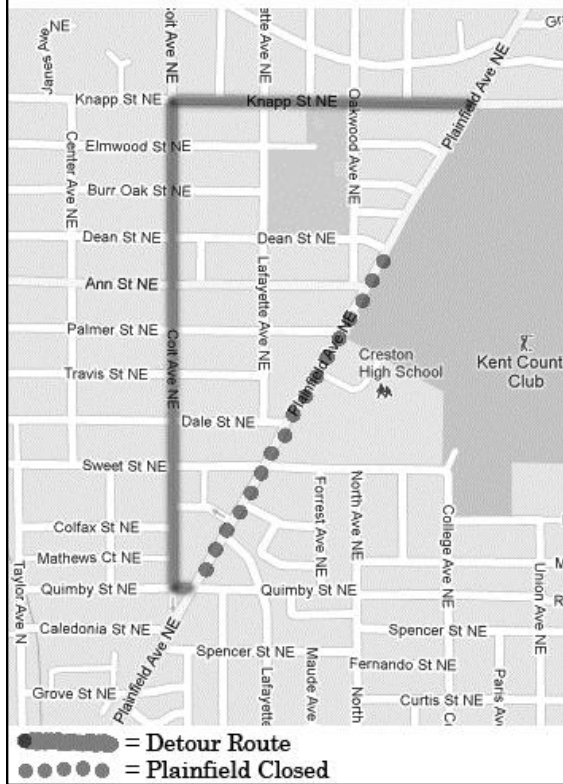
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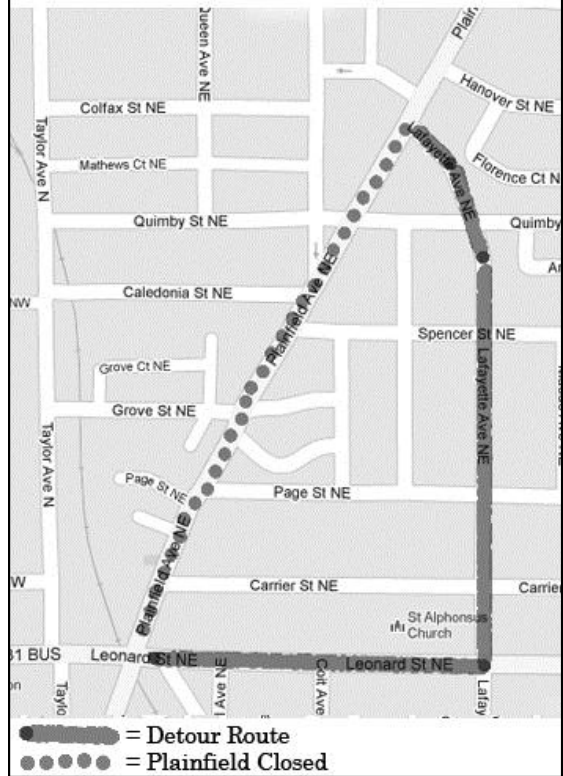
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Plainfield Construction detour maps

Phase One: June 11 - July 7



Phase Two: July 7 - Aug. 25



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Local History: Creston Theatre

By: Julie Tabberer

The Creston Theatre was a fixture in the neighborhood for almost 60 years.

First located at 1408 Plainfield Ave NE, the Crestonette Vaudette was opened in September 1914. The building was a small storefront, and the theatre would have shown silent movies, probably with musical accompaniment. A city directory from 1916 lists Hazel M. Bird as a musician at the theatre.

Other theatres in Creston

Roxy/Fairmont Theatre:
2150 Plainfield Ave NE, operated circa 1930-1945

Park Theatre:
433 North Park, operated ?-1950s

Do you know anything about the theatres in Creston? Let us know. Email julietabberer@gmail.com or call the CNA office at 616-454-7900

In 1923, the manager of the theatre, G. Glenn Fleser, announced plans to build a new movie theatre at 1516 Plainfield, replacing the Creston Grain Market.

The neighborhood newspaper, The Creston News, reported that "Creston is big enough to support a first class movie theatre and an up-to-date theatre building replacing the ancient wooden structure now on the site will be a marked improvement" (November 16, 1923).

The new Creston Theatre opened on Saturday, March 29, 1924. According to The Creston News, it was "one of the prettiest theatres of any in the outskirts of the city. They show high grade pictures and Crestonites may well feel proud of their theatre" (April 4, 1924).

Within five or so years, sound became widely accepted in motion pictures, and Mr. Fleser was probably faced with a steep bill to upgrade his theatre.

In May 1941 Harry and Eleanor Himmelstein purchased the Creston Theatre. Harry and Eleanor ran the theatre for 30 years – some of you may even remember them. They were especially popular with neighborhood kids on Saturday afternoons, and were known for giving away toys, candy and prizes. Chris Byron, local history librarian at the Grand Rapids Public Library, grew up in the area and remembers going to movies at the Creston Theatre. She recalls a door prize drawing before Saturday matinees for a chance to win "twenty-five pieces of red licorice."

In 1972, faced with dwindling audiences, the Himmelsteins decided to switch to showing adult films. On February 1, 1972 the Creston Theatre ran an advertisement in the Grand Rapids Press announcing their "new policy" and the opening of the The Butterfly, an "adult (x) film for sophisticated audiences."

The altered business approach doesn't seem to have worked, because in a few short years the Creston Theatre disappeared from the city directory listings. The building was listed as vacant for a couple of years, and then housed Creston Bingo from the late 1970s through the mid-1980s.

In 1986, the Grand Rapids chapter of the Society for the Preservation and Enjoyment of Barbershop Quartet Singing in America (SPEBQSA) purchased and restored the building. They turned it into Great Lakes Harmony Hall and held practices and meetings there, as well as hosting events and concerts.

The Creston Neighborhood Association even hosted Las Vegas Night fundraisers there in the late 1980s.

Since the early 1990s, the building has been occupied by Optical Supply. Rumor has it that art deco lights from the building's theatre days are still in the building.



The Creston Theatre, circa 1936. The marquee advertises the film *Ah, Wilderness!*, which was released in 1935 and starred Wallace Beery and Lionel Barrymore. Photo courtesy of the Grand Rapids City Archives.



The movie theatre as a bingo hall in August 1983. Photo courtesy of the Grand Rapids City Archives.

"Make the connection" with Creston

By: Mac Brown

CNA's tagline is "make the connection."

As with our events and block clubs, we encourage all our neighbors to connect with one another in the spirit of collective problem solving, public safety, and the sharing of local resources and knowledge.

It is always great to hear back from neighbors who have successfully made that connection and have benefitted from it.

One of CNA's most effective partnerships is with the Grand Rapids Police Department.

One of the programs that they offer is called Volunteers in Police Service. It puts our retired neighbors to work in our neighborhoods by enforcing handicap parking and checking neighbor's homes to see if they are secure while the owners are away. This is a free service.

Recently, one of our neighbors was referred to this program by CNA.

We put her in contact with Officer Lorna Zematis who runs the program at GRPD, and they had someone stop by her home while she was out of town.

"This has been a very reassuring

service while I was away during the winter months," she said. In her letter thanking us for connecting her with this support service she enclosed a \$100 check to CNA for helping her connect with this vital resource.

Thanks to her support we will continue to "make the connection" for others too in our continuing efforts to make the Creston Neighborhood a safer place.

Strengthening our connections throughout our lives

By: Deborah Eid & Norma K.

A group of five Creston volunteers, age 40-74, have been meeting to discuss making the Creston neighborhood a place that's attractive for people to stay even as they grow older and encounter challenges to their independent living. CNA received support from the Grand Rapids Community Foundation Encore program to lead these discussions.

Around the country neighbors are forming village networks to support themselves and one another through the later phases of life.

Norma K., one of the members, describes the process:

"What got us started was a meeting for block captains and other interested volunteers, where a survey was completed by 35 attendees.

"We've had several meetings and one of our volunteers designed a survey that can be used to determine what the main problems are.

"Sara K., a professional in the social work field and member of the group says that early intervention



Photo courtesy: CNA

Deborah Eid and A group of five Creston volunteers meet to discuss ways to make Creston an attractive place to live even as people grow older.

is key to preventing people moving prematurely into nursing homes. She went on to describe how a fall by a neighbor who might have gotten dizzy standing on high chair to change a light bulb could become life changing.

"If neighbors have a network of helpers they trust they are more likely to make the call to get the help they need. And helpers love to help!

"We are currently working to determine what are the biggest

needs for our older neighbors who are attempting to stay in their own homes. What type of assistance would be required? Could they afford to pay a monthly fee? Do they need transportation?

"Within the next few weeks, we hope to have the survey completed with a bigger group of volunteers who may be calling or coming to your door for input!"

La Huasteca: the best Mexican food in Creston

By: Pete Tabberer

La Huasteca can be easy to miss. Located at 1811 Plainfield Ave., Creston's first authentic Mexican restaurant is nestled between The Party Line Store and Bentley's Pizza. While it may be easy to overlook, doing so would be unwise.

I am not a connoisseur of Mexican food. My exposure has, sadly, consisted mostly of Taco Bell and the tacos that I make at home. After seating myself, I asked the server for a recommendation.

"We have a lot of favorites here," she replied. She pointed out some of their best sellers, of which there are many. Since I was striving for an authentic experience I chose two things I'd never heard of.

First, I ordered a glass of horchata, which is made fresh every morning. Horchata is a mouth-watering concoction of rice water, milk and various spices. It was possibly the most delightful thing I've ever drank. Even if you don't eat anything, the horchata is

worth coming out for. It was that good.

I also ordered a plate of sopas and when they arrived I didn't know how to eat them. I suppose this speaks to either their authenticity, my American-ness, or, most likely, both. I was too embarrassed to ask so I went with a knife and fork. Considering the mess I made, this was probably the wrong choice.

The sopas were delicious, regardless of how they should be eaten. They were made from little corn cakes that were crispy, yet somehow soft too. They came with a mound of your choice of meat (I chose chicken and spicy pork) as well as lettuce, beans, sour cream and much more. Yummy.

A steady stream of customers came and went while I ate and the owner said that business has been outstanding. They have many regulars from area businesses and have an equal draw for both lunch and dinner.

Construction is closing Plainfield in front of the restaurant, but



Photo by: Pete Tabberer

Rachael Van Dyke, a La Huasteca regular, enjoys a vegan taco with cactus, rice, and beans.

the owner is confident that it will not affect business. "All of our regulars know you can park in the back," she said.

La Huasteca is open 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 10 to midnight Friday and Saturday. You can dine in or take out. If you are craving authentic Mexican food, La Huasteca is there to fulfill your desires!

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**Monday, July 9 at 4:30
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Editor's Corner: Fireworks

By: Pete Tabberer

The fourth of July is coming and I don't need a calendar to know it. All I need to do is listen.

Every year, without fail, about a month prior to the fourth kids on our street will start lighting off fireworks.

In principle, I don't disapprove of this behavior. I was a kid once. I loved little more than driving to Indiana and returning with a trunk full of illicit fireworks.

Here's the difference: I didn't live in the city. I grew up on a farm way out in the sticks. I could (and occasionally did) light off M-80s all day. I worried about little more than frightening the pigs. Our closest neighbors were a quarter mile away. I don't think I they could even hear the racket.

In retrospect, my parents might not have enjoyed the mayhem as much as my siblings and I did, but they also

never did much to dissuade us.

Imagine all that noise. Now move it to the middle of a city street. It seems a whole lot louder there than it did in the middle of a field. Now imagine all that noise at three in the morning, which isn't unusual on our street. It can be annoying.

I don't want to be an old grump. I don't want to deprive children of the joy of fireworks that I experienced as a kid. And I realize that most kids don't have the luxury of a remote farm on which to create chaos.

So, when I hear firecrackers popping in the street, I grin and bear it, and try to be glad the kids aren't wasting their summer doing more sinister things like robbing liquor stores. I'm willing to strike a deal with every neighborhood kid. You can have all the fireworks on earth, but only if you don't light them in the middle of the night.

North End Connection 2012 Issue 2 (Summer)

Creston Neighborhood Association

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Board meets the 4th Thursday of most months.
6pm @ CNA offices.

The North End Connection

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- ☐ Writing for print newsletter
- ☐ Selling business ads for print newsletter
- ☐ Mail preparation for print newsletter
- ☐ Delivery to local establishments

Electronic Communications: Social Media to promote the Creston neighborhood

- ☐ Website expansion
- ☐ E-newsletter
- ☐ Media Releases

Hello Neighbor Committee: Plans & implements events to increase CNA membership base

- ☐ Pancake Breakfast
- ☐ Aberdeen Celebration In the Park
- ☐ Walking & delivering flyers/announcements
- ☐ Delivering yard signs
- ☐ Volunteer recruitment & appreciation

Fundraising Committee: Plans & implements events to sustain CNA services and programs

- ☐ Planning
- ☐ Art Battle
- ☐ Texas Hold'Em

Living Green in Creston: Promotes the environment health of the Creston neighborhood

- ☐ Planning
- ☐ Perennial Exchange
- ☐ Parks & Playgrounds
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To organize residents and resources to promote the social, economic and environmental health of the Creston community!

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Community Calendar

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Riverside Date Night

Friday June 22

8:30pm @ Riverside Park

Details inside! See page 3

CNA Board meetings

June 26 & July 26

6pm @ CNA Offices

National Night Out

Tuesday August 7

4:30-7:30pm @ Sweet St. and College Ave.

Creston Neighborhood Dumpsters Clean-Up

Saturday September 8

8am to 12pm @ Berean Baptist (1574 Coit NE)

8th Annual Creston Car Show

Saturday September 15

11am - 3pm @ Creston Business District

North End Connection



Summer 2012