



North End Connection

The Newsletter of the Creston Neighborhood Association

Spring-Summer 2014

Improvements coming to Creston's roads

By: Pete Tabberer & Deborah Eid

After a long and especially harrowing winter produced a bumper crop of potholes, and as a result the condition of area roadways has been a hot topic. With several projects in the neighborhood currently in the works, as well as new funding that will benefit the entire city, signs of improving infrastructure will soon be visible everywhere.

Street and Sidewalk Tax

On Tuesday, May 6, Grand Rapids voters overwhelmingly approved an extension of the city's temporary income tax to pay for

road repairs.

The income tax will raise around \$10 million per year through 2030. This money will fund road repairs and sidewalk maintenance. The need for this funding ought to be obvious to those who have driven any number of Creston's streets lately.

Unfortunately for those that regularly drive on Knapp Street east of Plainfield, we will have to endure some stretches of

rough road for a while longer.

Residents will, according to City Manager Greg Sundstrom, not begin seeing the impact of the funding until next year. This construction season will be devoted to preventive maintenance and design work. But, even if we have to wait, a future of fewer potholes is

something to celebrate!

Monroe Avenue

In the Summer 2013 issue of the North End Connection we highlighted the coming improvements to Monroe Avenue along Riverside Park.

CNA and Riverside neighbors advocated for these improvements for years and at last we were able to make our voices heard.

Earlier this year construction began on the first phase of this two year project. Work on resurfacing, sidewalk additions and the traffic circle at Guild Street is



Photo by: Pete Tabberer

The first phase of the overhaul of Monroe Avenue began earlier this year. The intersection at Guild Street will be the location of the first of several new traffic circles.



Photo by: Pete Tabberer

Dangerous potholes, like these seen on Ann Street near Coit, may soon become much less pervasive, thanks to a recent City income tax extension.

The importance of healthy insects

By: Caroline

Most of us have probably heard about the dramatic decline of the bee population. More recently the sudden decline in the monarch population has also been in the news, but what about the health of other beneficial insects?

Bees and butterflies are the recognizable, even understandable, insect stand-outs, but what do you suppose is happening with the rest of the insects—and why should you and I care?

The health of many insects is hanging in the balance, and the loss of insects matters a great deal. Insects play a foundational role in the production of food (80% of what we eat is pollinated by insects, according to Dr. Spivak, professor of apiculture at the University of Minnesota).

Insects also break down organic matter, and insects are the main food source for birds. But insects die off without their specific food supply plants.

Beneficial insects thrive in diverse habitats, but those habitats are being lost to sprawling monoculture farm fields and bluegrass lawns as well as parking lots and roads. Well known herbicides are sterilizing land that once was thriving with plant and insect diversity.

There are numerous organizations and individuals who have committed themselves to reconstructing native plant communities, one sterile lawn or farm field at a time.

According to Dr. Tallamy, professor of entomology and wildlife ecology at the University of Delaware, we can't continue to wage war on the homes and food supplies of other animals, if we have any hope of coexisting with them into the future.

The great news is this: Anyone with a garden or yard can help to slow



down this crisis by planting an array of native plants, coaxing life back to the soil with native plants (without using herbicides) while supporting the habitat of diverse native insects (without using insecticides).

Living Green in Creston recently held a well-attended native plant workshop for the neighborhood. There are clearly many great reasons for planting natives: They help reduce storm water runoff, they contribute to a healthy, diverse ecosystem, and they beautifully supply food and shelter to beneficial insects that are foundational to our food supply.

Track us on E-news and Facebook for Living Green's upcoming Monarch Butterfly Waystation Celebration in Briggs Park!



Photo by: Kenneth Dwain Harrelson

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My Furnace Adventure: Part 3

By: Sharon Zils

Editors Note: This is Part Three in a series about the Grand Rapids Housing Rehabilitation and Grant Program. Part One told of Sharon's broken furnace that led to her interest in the program. Part Two talked about the application process. This installment discusses working with the city and choosing a contractor.

There is a position called the Housing Rehabilitation Specialist at the Community Development Department. They are trained to know what to do, when to do it, and most importantly, to assist the homeowner with any questions they might have.

Mine was a god-send because the stress that I was experiencing over not having a working furnace was tremendous and it showed.

Lisa had called me within a few days of my loan approval to schedule an inspection. She also needed to make sure that my furnace was beyond help. It would be the fourth declaration of that fact.

I didn't know what to expect during this initial meeting, so I had a notebook and pen in hand as we did the walk through of my

house.

I understood the various programs offered by the City, but Lisa explained how their process applied to me and my situation as we went room by room. In her experience performing these inspections, she was able to visually determine that by the age of my windows and the looks of the interior ceilings, walls and trim that lead paint was more than likely present.

It was about this time that I decided to go for broke and add replacement windows to the mix. I already knew that the pay back amount for the loan would be the same, so I went for it. In addition, the original wooden front and garage doors would also be replaced. Things were moving along, slowly but surely

Another appointment was scheduled so that Lisa could go over the lead paint report and explain it to me in plain English. It had many pages written in scientific jargon with charts and it was complicated. She spent the time to translate that the bottom line meant remove or cover lead paint hazards.

This work would be covered by the loan amount, or in my case, I could do some of the interior work myself. The condition of the paint on my walls and ceiling wasn't in the "very severe" category. She suggested to me what to buy and how to do the job.

Her most helpful hints involved preparation for the contractor.

By now it's the end of July, more than two months after my furnace stopped working, and the next step was to post the job for contractors to bid.

But first they also had to do a walk-through of my home. Lisa told me that as many as 10 contractors would show. There were 7, plus a subcontractor for the furnace. Some of the men greeted Lisa as if they were old friends. Most have been doing this for a long time just as Lisa has for the city.

Bids were due on August 15.

See: Furnace, pg. 4



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The lowest one gets the job.

It turned out that Dale of Builders Unlimited, the contractor I most liked, got the job. He was the only one who spoke to me on the day when the contractors' had the "look-see" before submitting a bid.

A week later Dale, Lisa and I had met to go over the contract and sign the papers.

Before this occurred, Lisa asked me if there was anything else that I could think of that needed to be fixed. I disclosed that there was a problem with the toilet. The wax ring needed to be replaced because the flange was cracked.

My brother discovered the problem when I told him about my rocking toilet, but he had told me the repair was beyond his expertise.

Lisa was able to add that on to the contract because it fell under a different repair program for which I was eligible. All in all, I was beginning to believe that my "no heat" problem was finally going to be solved, along with a few others.

Five days later, the furnace was installed. The window installation was scheduled for September 23. In between, a very nice licensed plumber by the name of Ruben repaired my toilet.

The only thing that I had to really scramble over was moving out for the five day duration. The cat went to my brother's and I went to my aunt's condo. I was grateful that my family stepped up to help me, but I hope never to repeat that scenario. I didn't want to be known forever at the family reunions as the "smelly fish" who over stayed my welcome!

Community Gardening!

By: Mac Brown

Our 4th gardening season is off to a great start this year with all 31 of our plots rented! The Creston Community Garden is located behind CNA's offices at 205 Carrier.

We would like to send out a big thank you to our business neighbors, Plastic Plate of Lacks Int'l. for donating \$1000 to fund our garden coordinator for this year. We are also happy to announce that past garden coordinator Ms. Mandi Creveling is with us again working in this position!

A big thank you also goes out to Kutsche's Hardware on Leonard N.E. for our garden tools and the wonderful students from Calvin for helping us with our first spruce up of the year.

We look forward to a great gardening season with the goal of us-



ing our public spaces to provide our neighbors and St. Al's local food pantry with as much fresh produce as possible.

To apply for a garden plot or get involved visit crestoncommunitygardens.org. or find us on Facebook.

Please join us for a summer solstice garden work day on June 21st from 11am to 2pm at the Carrier Street Garden. Come work in your plot or help a neighbor, bring seeds for a swap, share gardening tips and more!



A new season at New City Urban Farm

By: Lance Kraai

A common refrain from first time visitors at New City Urban Farm is, "I had know idea this was even here!" This is typically followed by an amazement that so many vegetables are being grown right in the neighborhood.

This isn't too surprising, since the farm is nicely tucked behind 4th Reformed Church at the corner of Page and Union, and only one row of houses separates it from Leonard.

New City Farm is in its third growing season. It is located on a two acre lot owned by 4th Reformed Church and is currently the largest urban farm in the city of Grand Rapids.

The farm grows a full spectrum of over 20 different kinds of vegetables, many of them unique heirloom varieties, using organic growing practices.

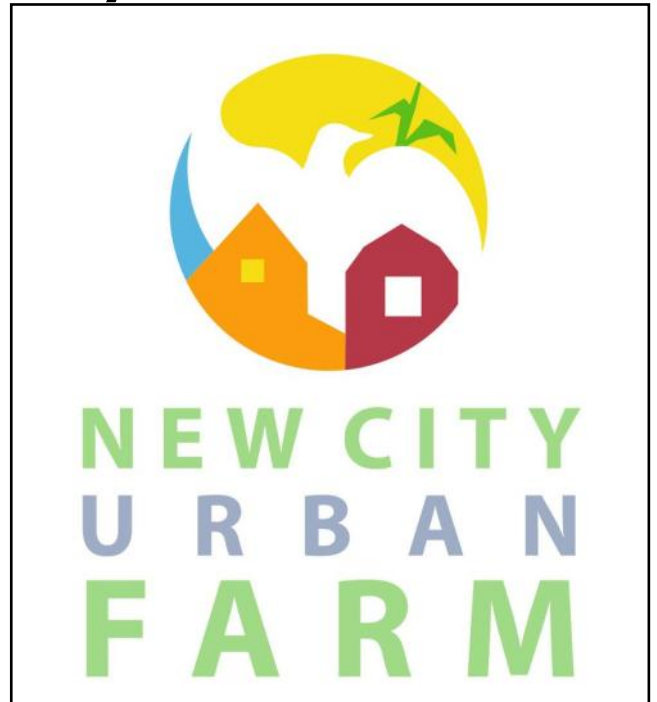
A majority of its food is sold through CSA farm shares. In this model, customers (shareholders) purchase a share of the farm's produce. This entitles them to a box of produce every week from June-October. There are full shares, half shares, and quarter shares meant for different household sizes.

Produce is also sold through a weekly farm stand on site (1226 Union NE) every Thursday from 4- 6 pm.

In addition to New City's produce, the YMCA Veggie Van, a mobile farmer's market, will be present at the same time. The Van will have additional produce along with fruit, honey, nuts, eggs and some prepared food. In effect, the farm will become a tiny Creston farmer's market.

Both the farm and the Veggie Van accept Credit Cards, Bridge Cards, Senior Fresh and Double-up-Bucks. Double-up-Bucks make every EBT purchase of vegetables buy one get one free, doubling the value of every dollar spent, making healthy produce available to all of our neighbors.

The farm has also partnered with Creston's very own Graydon's Crossing. Graydon's will feature New City produce in weekly specials, and they will have two farm-to-table dinners with produce completely grown by New City and paired with local



Michigan Beer. This season's dinners will be on July 15 and August 12.

Finally, New City Farm is a program of the faith based non-profit New City Neighbors. The farm was created to employ Creston neighborhood youth. Each season the farm hires eight high school students. Students learn the hard work of organic farming, but they also participate in a job skills curriculum that prepares them to interview well for other jobs, how to apply to college, and much more.

The whole project is a neighborhood one that seeks to see good food grown in the neighborhood, by the neighborhood, and for the neighborhood.

To find out more visit www.newcityneighbors.org or search for NewCityUrbanFarm on Facebook. For upcoming info on the Graydon's Crossing Dinners visit www.graydonscrossing.com.



Photo Courtesy: New City Urban Farm

The Creston News

The Creston News was a weekly neighborhood newspaper, published from the early 1900s through the 1950s. The paper included everything from marriages and obituaries to news on who was visiting relatives or on vacation. Enjoy this selection of stories and ads from 100 years ago.

In 1914 people were still getting used to automobiles, and streetcars were still running.

Joseph Doherty has filed a declaration in superior court in a suit against the Grand Rapids Railway company in which he seeks to recover \$10,000 for alleged permanent injuries. Doherty charges that when he was about to board a street car on May 27, the motorman started the car too soon, causing him to be thrown to the pavement. He alleges that he suffered a dislocated shoulder and that he sustained other injuries.

D. A. Drummond, 1609 Plainfield avenue, made complaint to the police department that motorcycles and automobiles are driven through that neighborhood, which includes "Dead Man's Curve," at 40 to 50 miles an hour, to the great danger of people walking or driving along that road. When auto-cops are near by, due observance of the law is given, but the moment there is a free road, drivers handle their cars with great recklessness.

Dr. Dekker of Plainfield avenue had the misfortune of breaking his wrist Wednesday morning while cranking his Ford car. If he had put on a Sandbo starter chances are it wouldn't have happened.

The condition of area roads was already an issue.

Enough money is in sight and everything is now in readiness to complete the proposed sidewalk on the north side of Knapp avenue, from Plainfield avenue to the school house, according to the plans devised early in the spring.

The plans were discussed at a meeting of the Creston-Fairplains association, at the residence of H. H. Hayes on Spencer street, Tuesday evening. It was decided to now ask the town board of Grand Rapids township to proceed with the grading as previously agreed. The committee given charge of the work will at once carry out the plans of the joint association and it is expected that the walk will be completed by about the middle of August.

While excavating for the new brick pavement, which is being laid at Coit avenue and Quimby street the track and roadbed of the old street railway system which used to traverse Coit avenue years ago, were uncovered.

While horseback riding with Thomas Bradfield Monday night George Clingman's horse broke through the North Park bridge and was rescued with difficulty. Mr. Clingman, it is understood, will sue the county, charging negligence in care of the bridge.

Plainfield avenue from Ann street to Knapp street is being re-graveled.

A local butcher bought a fancy new meat chopper.

James Pollie, Creston's energetic and progressive meat dealer, has added a Hobart Electric Meat Chopper and Coffee Granulator to his already well equipped place of business. One can now buy the choicest cut of meat and have it ground up while you wait and see it done. It means a large outlay of money but "Jim" is bound to please his trade.

Hot water heaters were available, but many people still heated water on the stove for baths.

Do You Bathe in the Wash Tub?

What do you do when Saturday comes? Do you heat water in the kitchen boiler, and drag out the old wooden wash tub in which they "did" last Monday's clothes?

No, you probably have a modern bath tub. But in many homes the kitchen boiler or the teakettle still heats the bath water.

These folks never have enough hot water—they would rather take a "teacup bath" than fuss with carrying and heating a lot of water.

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... And the future Red Jet Café was remodeled for the first of many times.

The interior of the Plainfield Avenue Branch of the Kent State Bank is being redecorated, this time a lighter color. When completed it will be a very inviting place to go, especially so, to meet the jovial, good natured attendants. C. Smit is doing the work.



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8th Annual Art Battle for Community

On May 15, Art Battle for Community returned for an eighth year to the Rezervoir Lounge.

CNA would like to thank Rapid Growth's Tommy Allen for once again being the best host/auctioneer we could ever ask for. We would also like to thank all the artists who were willing to put themselves on display and all the neighbors who came out to mingle, support CNA, and buy art.

You are all the reason that Art Battle is one of CNA's longest running and most popular events. We couldn't do it without you!



Pancake Breakfast

currently underway.

While it may mean a slightly longer commute for those that regularly drive that stretch of Monroe, the end results will be well worth the wait!

Three Mile Road

Following input from area residents a number of improvements are planned for the stretch of 3 Mile Road from Plainfield to Fuller.

According to the City's letter to residents and CNA, "existing pavement markings will be modified to include a bike lane on each side of the street and an on-street parking lane on the south side. Parking on the north side will be eliminated by posting no-parking signs."

"This continues our City's sustainable streets efforts by improving safety and connectivity for north enders who want to commute by bike to their jobs and events downtown Grand Rapids."

By: Pete Tabberer & Deborah Eid

On Saturday, March 15 CNA staff, Volunteers are and members of the community gathered at 2nd Congregational Church for yet another successful Pancake Breakfast and town hall meeting.

Many enthusiastic neighbors thanked our staff and board for holding this annual town hall to connect with each other and learn more about neighborhood and city-wide developments that affect us directly in Creston. And we always have first timers who are surprised by how great our food is. The strawberry and apple toppings and whipped cream and fruit bowl especially!

The town hall portion of the event featured Steve Faber of



Photo by: Lucas Meschke

2nd Congregational Church hosted a full house for yet another successful pancake breakfast.

Friends of Grand Rapids Parks. Also, Cyndy Irving of Fix Our Roads got out the vote for the City income tax extension which passed (see cover story)!

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Working together for a stronger community

By: Mac Brown

On April 29th CNA once again held it's annual Friends of Public Safety Dinner and Training and I would like to thank all of those involved for coming together in recognizing our neighbors that take on the sometimes thankless yet personally rewarding work of organizing for a safe community for their families and neighbors.

To those neighbors that could not attend or perhaps have not connected with CNA about their excellent public safety work, a big thanks to you as well. Also kudos to Red Jet Cafe for donating our dinner! We've never seen so many wonderful things in a salad!

The event was also a great time to review public safety practices for the summer, since crime has a tendency to trend upward as it warms up.


Our neighborhood has some of the lowest crime rates in the city, thanks in part to informed neighbors. Now that our vigilance is paying off; it is time to direct some of our attention public safety discussions at a city wide level.

Grand Rapids is in the process of hiring a new police chief and if you have been following some of our work for the last few months, CNA has made clear our vision of how we hope to work with the GRPD to build a flourishing commitment to the philosophy and organizational strategy of Community Policing. We are glad to see that our City Manager has made it top priority when it comes to selecting a new chief too.

The core principles of Community Policing require a direct avenue for the community to give input into the policing process

and move beyond the narrow focus of individual crime incidences. These nationwide accepted principles include: *Creativity, Community Empowerment, Decentralized and Personalized Policing, Immediate and Long-Term Proactive Problem Solving, Mutual Trust and Respect, Full-spectrum Proactive Policing 24/7, Outreach to the Most Vulnerable (juveniles, elderly, minorities, the poor, the disabled and the homeless), Grass-Roots Creativity and Support, Department-wide Change with All Police Officers Practicing Community Policing, Building for the Future - Police as a resource and service to community.*

By educating ourselves on what these goals are and knowing our community role we can help the ease this GRPD transition for the better and ensure a true change from within.



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North End Connection
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Board meets the 4th Thursday of most months. 6:30 pm @ CNA offices.

The North End Connection is a community newsletter published 4 times a year with a circulation of 1000 and is distributed in various local businesses. Advertising space is available. Contact our office for rate information.

The North End Connection is produced by volunteers and published by the Creston Neighborhood Association. The views and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the staff, Board of Directors or membership of the association.

CNA is partially funded by the City of Grand Rapids Community Development Block Grant and Justice Assistance Grant Funded Programs.

Volunteer Opportunities at CNA

Volunteers are important to the Creston Neighborhood Association! If you would like to get involved, here are some areas where you can help.

YES! Count me in:

- Communication Committee:** Promote the work of CNA through writing, photography, and graphic design.
- Volunteer and Membership Committee:** Encourages participation in CNA.
- Fundraising Committee:** Plans & implements events to sustain CNA services and programs
- Living Green in Creston:** Promotes the environmental health of the Creston neighborhood

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Annual Neighborhood Night Out
 Briggs Park Tues. Aug. 5th 4-7pm

Creston Car Show with CNA Beer Tent
 Sat. Sept. 6th 11am-8pm

Watch for Event Updates and Meet-
 ings by following The Creston
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Spring-Summer 2014

North End Connection