Historic Westside

News

















January 2017

"Linking Neighbors and Celebrating Diversity"

Issue Five

Inside This Issue....



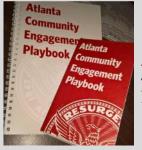
The NPU Process PAGE 3

SteamSports First Robotic Tournament PAGE 4





You Can Buy a House PAGE 5



Playbook is Here: www.ourcommunity. is/engaged PAGE 6



Poetry Page PAGE 7



Mural at a high school in Base Terre, Guadeloupe—photo by Patrice Ganot

World Is Watching: Citizen Journalism

By Paulette Richards

Since August 2014, when outraged citizens posted images of Mike Brown's lifeless body broiling on the pavement in Ferguson, Missouri, citizen journalists have been using cell phone cameras and social media platforms to raise awareness of police violence against African Americans across the country. Their efforts have attracted attention from all over the world.

"Will violence against African Americans increase now that Donald Trump has been elected president?"

I fielded questions that were variations on this theme over and over during a recent visit to Guadeloupe – an overseas department of France in the eastern Caribbean.

La Ligue des Droits de l'Homme (a human rights organization) had invited me to speak at their December 10th conference honoring the 68th

anniversary of the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man. The topic of the event was police violence against African American citizens.

I stepped off the plane in Point à Pitre on December 9th and was immediately whisked to the public television station. I gave six presentations in which I traced the systemic racism that has diminished the value of African American citizens' lives on every measure back to the three-fifths compromise embedded in our Constitution.

Our Founding Fathers made a Faustian bargain to keep the slaveholding states in their more perfect union by allowing them to count five slaves as three persons for purposes of apportioning seats in Congress and the Electoral College. This compromise gave the slaveholding states a numerical

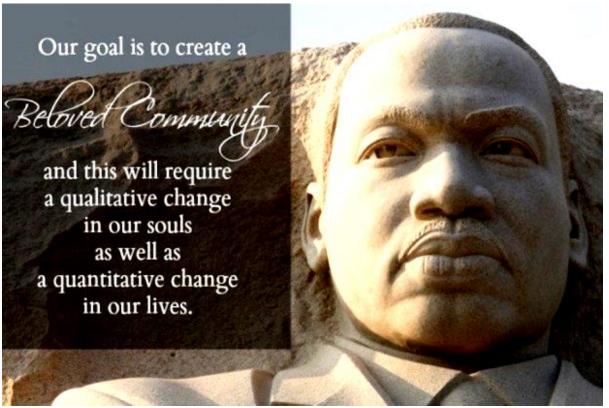
Continued on Page 6

Publisher's Corner

Beloved Community

Gentrification of urban American cities is a complex phenomenon with social, political and economic implications. It represents a double edged sword with both opportunities and challenges. The infusion of higher income individuals into urban centers generates increased renewal investments in formerly neglected and abandon blighted communities. It provides needed revenue to local municipalities to meet the expense of much needed infrastructure and service delivery improvements. Unfortunately, gentrification and displacement are manifesting as synonyms nationally as the urban center across our nation thrives to attract upper-middle-income families while displacing current residents with increasing housing cost that exclude the working poor and altering the cultural and historical fabric of urban America cities.

Gentrification can be managed and provide an opportunity for Atlanta Georgia to honor its most noted son and drum major for social justice: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Atlanta can once again shine as an urban American city "Too Busy to Hate" we can redefine the G word. We are in a moment of opportunity for the creation of the "Beloved Community," a community of racial and economic diversity. But it will not *just happen*, it must be *intentionally developed*. It is simple, but requires authentic partnership between



Atlanta's Historic Westside communities have the opportunity to honor its most noted son and drum major for social justice: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision. We can once again shine as an urban American city "Too Busy to Hate" whom redefined the G word by creating an inclusive community model of the "Beloved Community."

community, political and private stakeholders committed to the possibility of the "Beloved Community." It will require a resident retention plan that prevents forced displacement, inclusionary Affordable Housing Policy that supports mixed income and racial diversity by acknowledging the area medium income, and a Tax Abatement program to protect vulnerable home and business owners.

The Historic Westside Community is poised with the opportunity to manifest not forced displacement, but demonstrate how to align urban transformation with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision of "The Beloved Community." A community where justice and equality is the order of the

day; an authentic mixed community where all can live, change and grow without the destruction of the Historic Westside Community's cultural integrity. Now that would be a resounding way to celebrate MLK Day!

As residents and stakeholders we will either fulfill or betray the vision of the beloved community based on our actions or inaction. There is a critical need for advocacy on behalf of the often marginalized long-term residents in gentrifying communities; we have the opportunity to shift that. Where do you stand? I shall continue to thrive to be a drum major for justice, equality and inclusion for the establishment of the "Beloved Community."

D. Makeda Johnson, Resident Vine City Community Advocate

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Mayor Maynard Jackson's Legacy of Self-Determination:

Happy New Year from Ashview Heights

By Melody Cook-Blount

What would you like to see for Ashview Heights in 2017? Kids playing in the front yard, adults hanging out on the front porches and dogs running freely in their own park..... ALL of that is possible in Ashview Heights when there's a sense of community. It starts with a simple "Hello" as you pass by or an invitation to a neighbor to walk along with you. Stopping to chat or becoming a member of the Ashview Heights Community Association and attending our monthly meetings are more ways to create community. Membership is \$25.00/ year for residents and \$50.00/ year for business owners and investors. You may be asking yourself "How does this benefit me?" Getting involved in your community is a great way to foster relationships with others in your neighborhood who share the same interests.

We all would like to live in a safe and friendly community where residents care about one another's well-being. You cannot love your neighbors if you don't know them.

You can find our 2017 General Meeting, Social Event and Community Clean-Up calendar on NextDoor, Ashview Heights Community Association Facebook page and/or send an email to president@ashviewheights.com to request at copy. Be sure to start your New Year with a copy of the 2017 calendar of events on your refrigerator!

Melody Cook-Blount is a writer, an advocate and true believer in her neighborhood.



The NPU Process



I have been a descendant of enslaved Africans for 78 years. I have been a political activist for 50 years: 25 as a Marxist, 25 as a Christian. I have been a resident of English Avenue, by choice, for nine (9) years. I speak on behalf of the disempowered, disenfranchised, the least, the less, and the lost with a priority on the African American community. I am writing this article to put out a call for all residents of Atlanta to stand for and defend the City of Atlanta Charter, which mandates the neighborhood planning unit (NPU) system.

The NPU process mandates that new development/building that is outside a neighborhood's zoning or land use cannot be done without the residents having a say in the process and the outcome. Therefore, if the Westside citizens collectively come to the table and demand that the NPU process be followed, we have an opportunity to negotiate and modify the thrust of gentrification in the Westside.

Yet, our challenge as leaders is to first recognize that a large number of Westside residents basically have no knowledge about the NPU (Neighborhood Planning Unit) system. Mayor Maynard Jackson established the NPU system in 1974 to provide an opportunity for citizens to participate actively in the Comprehensive Development Plan, which is the City's vision for the next five, ten, and fifteen years. The NPU system is also a way for citizens to receive information concerning all functions of City government. The system enables citizens to express ideas and comment on City plans and proposals while assisting the City in developing plans that best meet the needs of their communities.

While I support the "Atlanta Community Engagement Playbook", as a tool to empower the NPU process, the NPU process is the law. We must call for the law to be followed! We must make no exceptions to following the law, no matter how "minor" the request for approvals may appear.

My position is that we must speak to our people in the context of self-determination. We can choose to let ourselves be run over, or we can choose to stand up and determine for ourselves what is just and righteous. I believe that the NPU process is one of our most powerful tools in this period if we stay with it and apply it to the letter of the law while demanding that those in power do the same.

Peace and love all, Mother Mamie Moore Resident By Choice, English Avenue

Neighbors are encouraged to attend your Historic Westside's NPU meetings:

NPU K (Washington Park)

Third Tuesday of the Month, 6:30 PM
C.A. Scott Recreation Center
1565 M.L. King Jr. Dr. Blvd

NPU L (English Avenue, Vine City) Second Tuesday of the month, 7:00 PM Kennedy Middle School 225 James P. Brawley Drive Rm125N **NPU T** (AUC, Ashview Heights, West End)
2nd Wednesday of the Month, 7:00 PM
KIPP Strive Academy
1444 Lucile St SW

NPU M (Castleberry Hill)

Fourth Monday of the Month, 6:15 PM

Helene S. Mills Senior Facility

515 John Wesley Dobbs Avenue

STEAMsport, Inc. First Lego Robotics Tournament

By William Oliver

What if I told you that over 40 youth from the Westside Communities representing M. Agnes Jones Elementary, Brown Middle School, and Hollis Innovation Academy competed in a tournament where they displayed their skill, hard work, and dedication to their craft?

What if I also told you that Westside Community residents and stakeholders including Atlanta Public Schools, The Atlanta Housing Authority, University Choice Neighborhood, Atlanta University Center Neighborhood Association, and private residents would come out on an early Saturday morning to welcome and support students during this tournament? Would you think this was a basketball, baseball, or soccer tournament? Maybe a spelling bee or science fair?

On December 10, 2016, the Westside Community came together to celebrate science, technology, engineering, arts



and math (STEAM) through the First Lego League Robotics Competition hosted by STEAMsport, Inc.

Over 50 students from the Westside Communities, along with students from other schools and organizations around metro Atlanta, competed in a robotics competition testing their robot building and programming skills along with core values, teamwork, and presentation.

Community stakeholders served as tournament judges, referees, and event volunteers combining both tournament rule enforcement with kind and gentle guidance. It was an action packed day where students from different walks of life came together to compete and celebrate STEAM.

At the end of the day, seven teams advanced to the First Lego League Super Regional Tournament including the Codebots from our own Brown Middle School.

Thanks to all of the participants, coaches, volunteers, stakeholders for making this event a success. Next year will be bigger and better!!!

For more information, contact William Oliver at johnhopecommunitycenter@gmail.com



Nia@AreaWestRealty.com

Bottom to Bottom Opportunities

By Gil Frank

"Yes we can do a head count but we have only little knowledge if people's lives have changed. We have 'metrics mania and impact mania" —The head of evaluation at a major National Foundation

The most important thing that I learned from Historic Westside Gardens' learning mission to Revision.coop Denver (CO) is that "trust' is the most empowering currency. By gardening with residents in their backyards, the Garden Angels (promotoras at Revision) develop a model of decentralized civic agriculture. Above all, they create trust. Residents raise issues they want to tackle. The trust earned brings with it the capacity to tackle those issues that are beyond the scope of affordable local food production such as intervention in eviction cases. This trust opens connections to allies brought by a trusted intermediary organization for technical assistance or even funder



activists. As residents in Denver told us: "It is easier when it is from the community"

Indeed, bottom-to-bottom networks are embodied by loose and flexible connections inside the neighborhood and, at times, from outside the neighborhood, through which people and groups actively participate in specific tasks meant to advance the completion of community projects focusing on multi-issues while addressing root causes. The concept of

bottom-to-bottom networks contrasts with the traditional emphasis on bottom -up approaches in community studies. This concept brings out the importance of the informal relations built during activities and encounters in the neighborhood streets or public life, as well as the intense neighborhood life in its physical setting, activities, and networks created by "marginal" urban actors in the inner-city neighborhoods.

Impact comes from trust. Trust comes from relationships when the connection is from a neighbor, not from a collective but from a side by side relationship, from belonging. Transformation has to be relational not transactional. Side by side, Bottom-to-Bottom.

In 2017 Historic Westside Gardens is looking for bottom-to-bottom opportunities to tackle issues with sister organizations that are broader than what one organization can handle alone.

Happy New Year! Gil Frank is a Historic Westside Gardens neighbor.

You Can Buy A House

"Right now is a GREAT time to stop renting and buy a house!" says neighbor Jesse Phillips who has lived in English Ave for 4 years. He owns a business selling calendars at NeuYear.net and last year he got married and bought a house.

Jesse found down payment assistance programs so helpful that he compiled a list for other aspiring homeowners:

Invest Atlanta (InvestAtlanta.com) 404-614-8280

- AAHOP, which offers up to \$20K.
 Vine City/English Avenue Trust Fund, up to \$10K,
- 3. Home Atlanta 4.0 up to 5% of loan.

AtlantaBeltlineHomes.com

404-554-0940

Offers 20% of purchase price up to \$45K, for homes ½ mile from BeltLine. Visit website for available homes



City of Atlanta NSP

AtlantaNSPHousing.com 404-420-1600 Up to \$20K

Atlanta Housing Authority

404-685-4346 Up to \$25K

Knowledge is power so once you have armed yourself with information about these programs, "Your first step is to call an Invest Atlanta approved lender and work on getting pre-qualified for a loan." As some of the best lenders, Jesse recommends:

Russell Elam - 678.381.2258, Michele Hipps - 404.680.1400, Bonnie Stewart - 678.248.3685, Joann Smith - 404.587.0672

"Your next step is to sign-up for the Invest Atlanta Home Buyer Q&A Session," he says. "Go to InvestAtlanta.com/intown-living/getting-started-homeownership/. After that, you need to take a Home Buyer Education class. Check the Invest Atlanta website for approved classes."

Finally he emphasizes "There are some great deals in English Avenue right now. Go to RedFin.com and search "English Avenue Atlanta" to find all the homes for sale in English Avenue. And if you find one that needs renovation, talk to Russel Elam about getting a 203K Renovation loan." Most of all, he asserts, "You can do it!"

Real Estate Professionals Perspective

Having worked with individuals and families in Affordable Housing for 6 years now, I couldn't agree more with Jesse Phillips that right now is a great time to buy a home and applaud his encouragement to our community to stop paying rent and start building equity for themselves. That, along with ensuring that our community members are able to have long term sustainable housing affordability, is at the heart of what I do at Committed to Communities. As a brand new nonprofit on the Westside of Atlanta, we have been in the game just over a year and have helped 27 individuals and families become homeowners since our inception. Of these new homeowners, 26 were First Time Homebuyers.

We do not take homeownership or community involvement lightly. There are some very real difficulties in owning a home, such as maintenance and repairs. Nevertheless, I see homeownership as a role that requires Who Benefits from First Time Homebuyer/ Down Payment Assistance Programs?

By The Numbers from

Committed to Communities:

Of their 26 first time homebuyers,

18 African Americans/ 7 Caucasian/ 2 (Other/Multiple Races)

16 received down payment assistance

(with 12 African American recipients)

individuals to grow and mature as they take on these responsibilities and become positive and engaged community members. I'm grateful to Jesse for mentioning myself and Committed to Communities as a resource to the community and would encourage any First Time Homebuyer to contact me, even if they do not need credit help. We serve to help individuals understand the homebuying process, maintain a list of excellent referral partners including all of the lenders that Jesse mentioned, and also serve as additional support to first timers as they approach what is typically a very stressful process. We're not only counselors or educators, we're also coaches. We can be an extra sounding

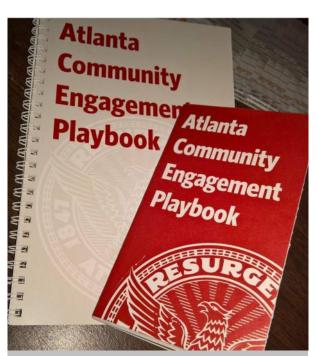
board, an ear to vent to, as we strive to give an inspirational push when needed to empower all of our clients.

Anyone interested in learning more about our programs and our organization can do so at

www.committedtocommunities.com.

You're also encouraged to follow us on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and are welcome to reach out to me personally for more info at 678-718-7222. For more up to date Down Payment Assistance grant information I'd encourage anyone to visit www.investatlanta.com for their 2017 programs and offerings. Unfortunately, I believe the days of homebuyers gaining \$60-80,000 of grant money towards their purchase are over, but there is still plenty of assistance available to make homeownership a realistic possibility for all and a large community of individuals willing to help. Myself, most certainly included.

Tawny Powell
Manager of Homebuyer Education and
Counseling
Committed to Communities
678-718-7222



"You can't prevent change but you can choose to grow" -Ms. Williams (during Jan. 6th community devotion)

Change is coming to the Westside. We need innovative tools to addresses the changes head-on, so we can grow as a community. On January 6, Living Cities Initiative (funders of Historic Westside News) presented the Atlanta Community Engagement Playbook to Westside neighbors and stakeholders at the Transform Westside Summit. The project's objective is to develop a community-led partnership to reestablish meaningful engagement between the City of Atlanta and its Westside neighborhoods. You can see the full presentation at https:// youtu.be/GNJ4zqsvgaE? <u>list=PLFaP7uRg-</u> 73ocecWDsTS3smCzc xMRqJh

A tool is only useful if it is in use.
Stakeholders can access the Atlanta
Community Engagement Playbook in
its entirety at www.ourcommunity.is/engaged.
An abbreviated "pocket" version, guide
sheets, case studies of those service
providers we felt executed plays well,
and more are also available on the site.

If you would like print materials, contact Chuck Barlow (info@iamsossi.org) and Terry Ross (t-ross01@hotmail.com) for books, brochures, and training sessions.

Transform Westside Summit is held the 1st and 3rd Fridays 7:15 am to 9:00 am at The Gathering Spot, 384 Northyards Blvd NW Building 100 Atlanta, GA 30313.

World is Watching: #BLM Cont. from pg 1

advantage in Congress, which enabled them to resist all proposals to abolish slavery. The compromise also added unnatural weight to the votes of electors from the slaveholding states since along with the pool of eligible white, male voters they represented slaves who could not vote. Five of the first seven U.S. presidents owned slaves.

When the Guadeloupians marveled at the results of the 2016 presidential election, I explained that in our time, redistricting and the disenfranchisement of African Americans swept up in the mass incarceration system contributed to the composition of a Congress that declined to renew the protections of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 in 2015. The disproportionate weight of votes for delegates from rural districts compared to diverse, urban centers like Atlanta reflects the legacy of the three-fifths compromise and has resulted in an Electoral College so thoroughly gerrymandered that it handed the presidency to a candidate who lost the popular election by 2.9 million votes.

"What is the effectiveness of the Black Lives Matter movement? How well has it served to raise consciousness?" the Guadeloupians asked. Many of them date their own sense of black identity to our Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. They wondered why no great leaders like Malcolm and Martin had arisen in this new phase of our ongoing struggle. I relied on *They Can't Kill Us All*, Wesley Lowery's chronicle of how citizen journalism and professional investigative reporting converged to highlight the new forms of de-centralized activism that

have brought the impact of systemic racism into public awareness worldwide.

Here in Atlanta where too many mothers have keened "these bones are not my child," we are painfully aware that cell phone videos and twitter feeds gone viral expose only a fraction of the endemic violence that has terrorized black communities from slavery times through the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan at Stone Mountain in 1915. According to FBI statistics for 2012, African Americans constituted less than 13% of the U.S. population but 34% of the reported missing persons cases. Fortunately, citizen journalism has opened a window on our private tragedies to the wider world.

The de-centralized structure of the Black Lives Matter movement embraces the type of grass roots, local organization that Ella Baker envisioned as participatory democracy. Hyperlocal journalism, whether it takes the form of social media posts documenting incidents of state violence against unarmed citizens or community newspapers registering residents' concerns about the potential economic violence gentrification may unleash on their neighborhoods is an essential direct action strategy. By thinking globally while acting locally, hyperlocal reporting in publications like the Historic Westside News can ensure that black lives matter in the eyes of the whole world.

Paulette Richards is a long time West End resident.





We Make It Right

By Brent Brewer, a West End resident

All my life I has to fight.

Redistricting like God

Reconstruction like: "God!"

Renaming like: "What?"

Brown, it's messed up.

Time to rise up!

If you give us a shot, then we goin' make it

right.

Brown, we goin' be alright.

Brown, we goin' be alright.

When you know, we been hurt, been down before, Brown.

When our pride was low, lookin' at the world like, "Where do we go, Brown?"

Need our voices heard, but your renaming game gonna put us dead asleep for sure,

Kids at the classroom door

Their reading's weak and math pencil's broke but we goin' make it right.

Brown, we goin' be alright.



Civics 101, Our Government and How It Works!

The Electoral College, Huh?

By Colette R. Haywood

There's no doubt that most Americans find their system of electing presidents down right confusing and silly. The proof can be found in opinion poll after opinion poll. Most people don't understand why we have the Electoral College. The Electoral College is a complicated system of choosing the president of the United States.

The first confusing thing about how the Electoral College works is that when Americans vote for a president, it is their state's "electors who will cast the deciding ballots directly for the president. The Electoral College is a non-direct election artifact created by the Founding Fathers, most of whom distrusted direct democracy. Electoral votes are based on congressional representation, the sum of senators and representatives.

There are 538 electoral votes. To win the presidency, a candidate must win 270 of them.

How It Works

When you vote for a presidential candidate you are really voting to instruct the electors from your state to cast their votes for the same candidate. For example, if you vote for the Republican candidate, you are really voting for an elector who will be "pledged" to vote for the Republican candidate. The candidate who wins the popular vote in a state wins all the pledged votes of the state's electors (with the exception of Maine and Nebraska).

The Electoral College system was established in Article II of the Constitution and amended by the 12th Amendment in 1804. Currently, each state gets a number of electors equal to its number of members in the U.S. House of Representatives plus one for each of its two U.S. Senators. The District of Columbia gets three electors. Each elector gets one vote. While state laws determine how electors are chosen, they are generally selected by the political party committees within the states.

Isn't There a Problem Here?

Critics of the Electoral College system point out that the system allows the possibility of a candidate actually losing the nationwide popular vote, but being elected president by the electoral vote.

Should none of the candidates win 270 electoral votes, the 12th Amendment kicks in and the election is decided by the House of Representatives. The combined representatives of each state get one vote and a simple majority of states is required to win. This has only happened twice. Presidents Thomas Jefferson in 1801 and John Quincy Adams in 1825 were elected by the House of Representatives.

It is possible for a candidate to lose the popular vote and still be elected president by the Electoral College. Five presidents have been elected in this manner: John Quincy Adams in 1824, Rutherford B. Hayes in 1876, Benjamin Harrison in 1888 and George W. Bush in 2000, and Donald Trump in 2016.

The Electoral College in Summary

• Votes cast by the people of the United States -- known as the "popular vote" -- are used to choose the president and vice president "indirectly" through the Electoral College.

Popular votes cast in the presidential election are actually being cast for a number of electors. Each state gets a number of electors equal to the state's number of representatives in the House and Senate.

There are a total of 538 electors

- The candidate winning the most popular votes in a state gets all of that state's electoral votes.
- The first candidate to win 270 or more electoral votes is elected.

Colette Haywood is a Vine City resident and likes web design.



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An initiative of the Atlanta Housing Authority and the City of Atlanta

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SISTERS ACTION TEAM

STEAMSPORT

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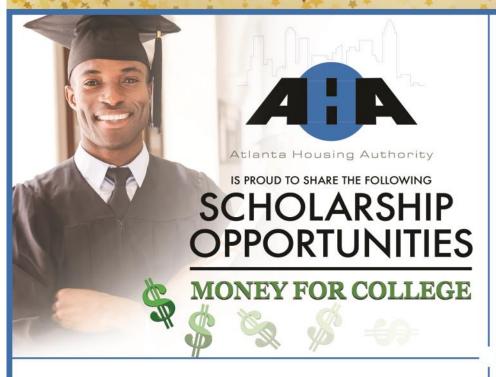
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