



Your Independent Resource for Maintaining and Improving Neighborhoods

COMMON GROUND

Marion County Alliance of
Neighborhood Associations

April 2005

SIGN, SIGN EVERYWHERE A SIGN!

By Norman Pace
McANA Land Use Chairman

After a year hiatus, the Department of Metropolitan Development's Sign Committee has resumed its mission. The previous Sign Committee focused on Billboard issues. This committee is now in process to address the rest of the sign ordinance.

There are 26 members who are serving on this committee. Some are new members because of changes in the City-County Council, and some are changes because we are addressing different types of sign issues. It is important to note that DMD has retained the neighborhood leaders on this committee, which served on the Billboard Sign Committee, as well as a majority of others representing various aspects of our business community. Overall, it is a good representation of all interested parties affecting our community.

Tammara Tracy, DMD Planner, is chairing this committee. We meet every month, which started in December. I was pleasantly surprised at our first meeting, because Ms. Tracy and DMD Planning Staff had outdone themselves in preparing a sign survey, which consisted of viewing photos of a wide variety of signs used by businesses and others in our community (legal and non-legal). Everyone present at that meeting took this survey.

The outcome of that survey was shared with members, and the results were surprising. The outcome from those surveyed revealed that numerous types of signs were overwhelmingly voted as negative. Some types of signs were voted by all members of the committee to be 100 percent negative. My surprise was that even members of the sign industry agreed with

neighborhoods about the negative affect some of these signs have upon our quality of life and the aesthetics impact to our community.

There is one type of sign that is not clearly identified in the survey because it is not definitive--and that is the the Electronic Variable Message Sign. However, McANA has received complaints from numerous neighborhoods and requests for help in remonstrating these types of signs in their neighborhoods. The EVMS has created such a ruckus that McANA issued a position

paper in September 2004 opposing all EVM signs. Also, in a meeting with Mayor Bart Peterson on February 23, McANA informed the Mayor about this issue and suggested

that maybe a moratorium might be necessary until the Sign Committee has completed it work. The Mayor has promised to look into this issue. In the meantime we will continue to remonstrate against the EVM signs.

The DMD staff has made this survey available to everyone on the Indy Gov web site. We encourage everyone to take this survey and give us your opinions on the types of signs you do or do not so that our work will address your opinions. **This is your opportunity to express your opinion on this issue! Please take a few minutes to complete the sign survey. The email address is: <http://www.indygov.org/dmdplan/signs>.**



~In This Issue~

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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

McANA is a 501©(3) organization.
All contributions are tax deductible.
Send to McANA, P.O. Box 1082, Indianapolis, 46206.

McANA is fully independent. It is dedicated to the improvement of all neighborhoods in Marion County through cooperation, sharing and advocacy. All neighborhood groups are joined for the common good.

ORGANIZATION MEMBERSHIP

New _____ Renewal _____
or

INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTION _____

Association Name

Contact Person

Township

Street Address or P.O. Box

City, State, Zip Code

Telephone

Fax

E-Mail Address

Memberships are invited from every neighborhood group registered with the city, and others approved by the Board of Directors.

Dues are January through December.

_____ Regular \$20 _____ Silver \$50 _____ Gold \$100

_____ Individual Contribution \$ _____

THANK YOU!

COMMON GROUND

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Thank You, Dr. Pat Andrews!

After three years of serving as editor of Common Ground, McANA Vice-President Pat Andrews is stepping down.

A great newsletter doesn't just happen by accident. Much time is spent researching and reviewing. There are long tedious hours at the computer, more time spent collating, addressing, and finally mailing the finished product. Then you get to do it all over the next month! In addition, you have to hound other people to contribute articles, so you don't end up writing the entire newsletter yourself. Publishing a newsletter is a lot of work, but Pat Andrews made it look easy.

Pat's decision to retire as editor of Common Ground was received with deep regret by the McANA Board of Directors. During her tenure, she played an important part in increasing our newsletter distribution and readership. Her expertise with computers, and her willingness and ability to work with text and layout took this little newsletter to a new level. She will be a hard act to follow.

But Pat is not leaving McANA. She will continue to manage our web site and serve as Vice President of the organization. We are grateful for her years of service to Common Ground, and we thank her for all she does for neighborhoods. Thank you Dr. Pat Andrews!

-The McANA Board of Directors

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COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: PROMISE OR SHAM?

*Opinion by Pat Andrews
McANA Vice President*

It has been my experience that the Comprehensive Plan is taken most seriously by the residents of Marion County. To them, the plan is no less than a promise about the future of their neighborhoods and community.

All neighborhood leaders who read this will recognize the following unattributed comments, which are often delivered with some nearly suppressed expression of exasperation--much like that of an adult to a child who has been playing the game of "Why?" a tad too long. "The Comp Plan is just a Guide."

"We judge each case on its own merits." "A person has a right to do whatever they want with their property."

As you know, the revision of the Comprehensive Plan has been going on since 1998, when the individual Township "Facilities and Services Needs Assessments" were compiled. Since that time we have:

- held Town Hall meetings to gather input from citizens about the issues they believe should be addressed
- set up a Steering Committee
- met in eight Issue Committees, whose efforts resulted in the "Community Values Component" of the Comprehensive Plan (adopted by the Metropolitan Development Commission on February 20, 2002)
- mapped land uses throughout almost the entire area involved in this Comp Plan
- set up an Implementation Committee to prioritize the recommendations

And now we are seeing the actualization of the Township Advisory Committees for the Comp Plan.

If there were any room left for doubt, the Mayor has declared over and over how very important the Comprehensive Plan is to our community.

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Seven years and counting, thousands of people involved, hundreds of thousands of hours spent, and who knows how much money invested in this revision of the Comprehensive Plan. All of this effort cries to the heavens proclaiming how VERY IMPORTANT the Comprehensive Plan is to us.

What, then, should we make of the fact that, of the rezoning petitions that went through the MDC (both expedited and heard) in 2004, 95 percent were approved? What, then, should we make of the fact that, of those petitions that did NOT comply with the Comprehensive Plan, 93 percent were approved?

This snapshot of a year in the life of "Zoning in Indianapolis" cries to the heavens proclaiming how VERY **UN**IMPORTANT the Comprehensive Plan is to the folks charged with its implementation. These data clearly show that the plan is NOT a guide, is NOT a reason for or against a rezoning request, and is NOT part of a set of criteria used to evaluate the merits of a particular zoning petition.

We should all be stunned and alarmed by these statistics.

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Comprehensive Plan: Promise or Sham? continued

The current Comprehensive Plan clearly states, "The Comprehensive Plan is meant to be implemented." The newly adopted "Community Values Component" contains an entire chapter on how to better achieve compliance with the plan. But, with the real outcomes so unrecognizable, what do we do?

McANA has dissected the data and analyzed the decision-making process to capture the individual components that result in the marginalization of the plan here in Indianapolis. On April 16, at our regular General Membership meeting, we will present those results. We have included the positions of all decision-making groups: the staff, the public, the Hearing Examiner, and the MDC (collectively and individually). We have looked at the level of agreement amongst these groups. We have examined the results on a township-by-township level, as well.

If we hope to bring the reality of zoning decisions up to the level of promise revealed by the Comprehensive Plan, then we all need to examine these results with an eye toward improving how each decision-making group performs its functions in the zoning process.

Now is the time for all Neighborhood groups to stand together and insist that the Comprehensive Plan become the primary component guiding development and redevelopment in Indianapolis that it was and is intended to be.

Dog Bite Prevention

It's that time of year again, and the Postal Service, health care providers and animal protection professionals need your help. Last year, nationwide, more than 3,400 letter carriers sustained dog-attack and dog-bite injuries.

This number pales in comparison to the more than 4.7 million people--most of them children and the elderly--who are bitten by dogs each year.

You can help protect your letter carrier, meter reader, newspaper delivery person, or your neighbors' children by making sure your pet is properly restrained. Be a responsible pet owner! Help prevent the injuries, pain and costs associated with animal attacks.



Best Places to Live Rankings: Flowers to Bloomington, Darts to Indianapolis

Opinion by Clarke Kahlo



In its April issue, The Men's Journal published its list of the 50 large and small cities considered the Best Places to Live. Bloomington received an eighth-place ranking. The ranking included nearly 50 variables related to quality of life.

The list designated Portland, Maine as the Healthiest city. "We're not so crowded that we're a concrete jungle," said one resident. In his state-of-the-city speech last month, Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson said he wants to get Indianapolis on the list of healthiest cities.

Speaking of concrete jungles, I chuckled when, after they announced the Bloomington accolade, the bubbly, pro-growth-at-any-cost-booster newscasters at WTHR-TV channel 13 bemoaned that Indianapolis didn't even make the Best Places to Live list. That's because some of our local politicians are averse to real environmental progress.

Mayor Bart Peterson, whose family business is real estate development in central Indiana, refused our offer of a Hoosier Environmental Council newsletter at a public tabling event in December. A followup letter with enclosed information to his Communications Director remains unanswered.



As to our city's health status, Indianapolis ranks 197th of the 200 largest cities for women's health issues, according to a 2003 issue of Self Magazine.

Indianapolis could be taking a leadership role in improving the livability of our state's capitol city, but our current mayor takes the lead only if a new downtown building or other new monument to municipal growth is proposed.

Clarke Kahlo is an active member of McANA and is President of the Hoosier Environmental Council

~IPD Crime Watch Announces~

2005 Crime Watch Block Captain and Community Association Block Captains Training Session
Tuesday, April 12, 2005 6:30-8:30 pm
Washington Park Family Center, 3130 E. 30th St.
(in old Washington Park Zoo,
North of IPD East District Roll Call)

RSVP: Shirley Purvitis, 327-3781 P1527@indygov.org

Guilty of NIMBYism!

Opinion by Cathy Burton
McANA President

When did defending your backyard get to be a bad thing born of ignorance?

How often have you heard someone's protest over an issue called NIMBYism? And yet, when I hear neighborhoods expressing their objections to some activity or proposal targeting their community, I do not often hear those neighbors say, "but hey, it's OK to dump this on the guys a few miles from here because we don't care about them." What I more often hear is, "this doesn't belong in anyone's back yard."

From the time many of us are old enough to be aware there is a world beyond our cribs, we are told that our home is one of the most important things in our lives. It is more than just four walls and the roof under which we live-- it is where we gather with family and friends, it is where our children grow up and our parents grow old. Our homes are filled with memories of neighborhood baseball games, birthdays and first proms, bedtime stories and backyard barbecues. Why shouldn't we defend our homes?

But when I stop to truly think about my own backyard, it is even more than just the property on which I pay taxes and the address on my driver's license. Part of what makes my home special is the neighborhood where I live. It is an older neighborhood (about 170 years) that has seen more prosperous times. But there is an extraordinarily strong sense of community here where people don't watch out just for their own backyard, but the backyards of the neighbors as well. Where a watchful eye is kept by everyone over the kids in the neighborhood. Where it is common to come home and find that someone cut your grass for you as a favor. Where people look for each others lost pets and take dinner to an ailing neighbor and take up a collection to help pay the bills when someone loses a loved one.

But who says my backyard stops at the end of my street? I am very proud of my township. I grew up here, and I was lucky enough to be able to come back here, buy a home and start a business. I don't have to

fight freeway traffic to get to and from work. It is a township where, even after a decade of explosive residential growth, the big social events of the year are the annual Little League parade and the local Friday night fish fry, where people can have some of the best homemade pizza in a restaurant that served their great-great grandparents. Where parents can still see their kids names published in the local paper when they make the honor roll. Where property is still referred to by the original owner's names. Where even though we have grown so much that you meet new people every day, we still come together as a community at Christmas time and provide food, clothes and toys to families that need a helping hand.



And then I have to ask myself, does my "backyard" really stop at the township boundaries? I love Indianapolis in spite of, or perhaps because of, its quirks and imperfections. I love going to Eagle Creek Park, Clowes Hall and the Indiana-

polis Speedway. I worry about the old homes that sit boarded up, our vanishing tree canopy and how few of our high school seniors are college bound. I worry about whether we will ever get a handle on the southwest side air pollution problem. I read the [Indianapolis Star](#), visit the antique malls, and sometimes drive up and down streets with no particular destination in mind just to see where the roads will lead. I think the downtown canal walk is absolutely worth the effort of getting there. I love driving through Southeastway Park in the fall and walking around Monument Circle to see the Christmas lights. And I get mad when I see the growing mountain of mining debris called Mount Hansen, and I am frustrated at how many adults are still struggling to make it without even being able to read. And I think there are a lot of people in this county who feel the same way.

I guess our backyards are really pretty big and the bottom line is, we are going to protect our "backyards" because we believe they are worth protecting.

And if that makes me guilty of NIMBYism--well I guess I can live with that. But don't tell me that means I don't care about my neighbors' backyards.

Community Development Summit to Begin April 11

The first of three forums for Indianapolis' second annual Community Development Summit will take place from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. on April 11 at the Indiana Government Center. The forum is open to the public. The effort is directed by a diverse group of civic leaders known as the Community Development Strategy Group and led by the City of Indianapolis and the Indianapolis Coalition for Neighborhood Development. Nationally recognized community development expert Anita Miller will discuss a vision of comprehensive community development.

A panel of experts, including local community leaders, will respond to Ms. Miller's comments and discuss how they put comprehensive community development ideas into action. After the discussion, Ms. Miller and the panelists will answer your questions.

This is the first of three community forums sponsored by the strategy group to further explore the concepts of Vision, Successful Initiatives and Leadership. The forums are an opportunity for continued community engagement on the issues identified at the October 2004 summit and in early strategy group work. All forums are open to the public.

The first summit in October 2004 focused on producing a vision of safe, healthy, and vibrant communities in which to live and work by engaging Indianapolis residents in a community-wide dialogue. It was a one-day event attended by 400 community members.

This year's summit has moved beyond a one-day event into an action-based process designed to transform Indianapolis neighborhoods from good to great. Since the first summit, the strategy group has met several times to discuss the concepts of comprehensive community development and principles for healthy neighborhoods. These ideas and principles build on the foundation laid by the community dialogue from the summit.

For updated information about the process and upcoming events, visit the summit and strategy group web site at <http://www.greatindyneighborhoods.org>. The web site also includes a discussion forum where you can contribute your thoughts and concerns as this process progresses.

For further information, contact Melinda Kennedy or Bill Taft, Strategy Group Co-Chairs, at the Mayor's office: 200 East Washington Street, 46204; 327-3601; fax 327-3980; TDD 327-5186.



**~WHAT~
Community Development Summit**

**~WHEN~
April 11, 6:30-8:30 p.m.**

**~WHERE~
Indy Government Center**

**~WHY~
Transforming Indianapolis Neighborhoods from Good to Great**



~WHO~

**<http://www.greatindyneighborhoods.org>
Melinda Kennedy or Bill Taft, 327-3601**

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Read about the new Comprehensive Plan
Advisory Committees.

Learn about McANA's efforts to understand
the benefits and pitfalls of the proposed
Indianapolis Works consolidation plan.

Keep up on the latest news about mining, I-69,
billboards and other topics of interest to Indy's neigh-
borhoods by logging on to www.mcanaindy.org.

If you would like to be notified when
Common Ground is posted, send an email
to webmaster@mcanaindy.org with
"sign me up" in the subject line.

~What's On Tap~

Saturday, April 16, 9-11 a.m.

General McANA membership meeting

North United Methodist Church, 38th and Meridian

Brief presentation by Kyresa R. Westbrook
Chair, Smoke Free Indy
Tobacco Control Specialist
American Cancer Society, Great Lakes Division

Main Presentation:

“Outcome of Rezoning Petitions Handled by
the Metropolitan Development Commission in 2004”
by Dr. Pat Andrews



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