



McANA

Your Independent Resource for Maintaining and Improving Neighborhoods

COMMON GROUND

Marion County Alliance of
Neighborhood Associations

October 2005

Parks Should be Priority for Public Funding --and Well-Being

PRESIDENT'S FORUM

This is a forum for the McANA President to share some personal views on matters that affect neighborhoods and life in Indianapolis. However, readers and members should know that these are personal opinions and that the issues portrayed in the President's column do not necessarily reflect official positions taken by either the McANA Board of Directors or the member organizations of McANA.

**by Cathy Burton
McANA President**

As I write this month's article, I am sitting around a rather large campfire, surrounded by a group of friends and family. In between the large cups of coffee and cocoa and slightly singed marshmallows (kids are willing to take on this task), we can hear the leaves rustling in a brisk fall wind and the occasional plops as acorns hit the tops of the tents. Strangers stop to chat with each other like old acquaintances and everything just seems to happen at a slower pace. I can feel myself relaxing more with each passing hour as we swap stories about past camping trips and plan ones for the future. All this for only \$23 dollars a night--less than many families spend on a fast food meal--a pretty good bargain for a "mini-vacation" by many standards.



Then I think back to the field trips we take with the kids from my child care center. At the beginning of the summer, I ask the older kids where they would like to go, and their first answer is usually to go to the park as often as we can. We do manage to visit several

parks through the summer, and they always protest when it is time to leave because they haven't gotten to spend as much time as they like. The kids enjoy going to different parks, but also frequently ask to return to the ones that are more familiar.

So what is my point? We are extremely fortunate that we have our greenways and our city and state parks to provide a chance to relax and enjoy ourselves. Although where I live in might still be considered "the country" by some, it is a rapidly developing suburban area that will soon have only a few remnants of the laid back rural community it once was. There are fewer and fewer places where you can step outside at night and truly see the stars, take a stroll through the neighbors' woods to have an impromptu picnic, or have enough room for a baseball game in the back yard. While not everyone is taken with the great outdoors, it does seem to be a frequently sought out place by large and diverse numbers of people.

So why are parks always one of the first places to take a hit when government funding gets cut or we are trying to balance a budget?

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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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*Indianapolis, IN

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Spirit & Place

The Polis Center at IUPUI, in collaboration with 150 local organizations, presents the 2005 10th Anniversary Spirit & Place Civic Festival, slated for November 4 through 20. The festival features nearly 100 concerts, plays, exhibits, dialogues and other events that will occur throughout Central Indiana.

In celebration of the festival's 10th anniversary, Spirit & Place has created a first-ever Gala event scheduled for Saturday, November 5, 7:30 p.m. at Indiana Repertory Theatre. The event will feature entertainment by Tim Grimm, locally based and nationally known singer and songwriter, plus Wendell Berry, nationally recognized author and poet. The event is open to the public: \$50 for open seating or \$100 for preferred seating with private dessert reception with Wendell Berry and Tim Grimm.

A Public Conversation takes place Sunday, November 6, from 3 to 5 p.m. at Clowes Memorial Hall on the campus of Butler University. The conversation features Wendell Berry, A'Lelia Bundles, Rabbi Lawrence Kushner and moderator Scott Russell Sanders. The focus is Moving and Staying, the theme of this year's festival.



West Nile Virus Found at 40 Sites in Marion County

by Glenn Pratt

The Marion County Health Department recently announced that it has documented 40 sites in Marion County with mosquitoes carrying the West Nile virus. The conditions that promote their growth are the local streams contaminated by failing septic tanks.

This is one more reason why we need to expedite the elimination of septic tanks and bring sewers and drainage to our neighborhoods--for our children, for our future. We need to let the Mayor and the City Council know that we need to complete the septic conversion in five to seven years, not 20 years as they now plan.

For details about the Marion County locations where mosquitoes carrying the West Nile virus have been found, see www.hhcorp.org. Or, you can contact John Althardt at 221.2316.

The 40 sites include:

- 8600 block of Morgantown Road in Perry Township
- The Butler University area in Washington Township
- 1700 block of East Sutherland Avenue in Center Township
- 3200 block of North Richardt Avenue in Warren Township
- 5400 block of South Linwood Avenue in Perry Township
- 6800 block of Dean Road in Washington Township



- 11th and Holt Road in Wayne Township
- 11000 block of East Washington Street in Warren Township
- 4900 block of East Todd Road in Perry Township
- 5600 block of Fall Creek Parkway North Drive in Lawrence Township
- 2700 block of South Harding in Center Township
- 4400 block of Nighthawk Court in Pike Township
- 600 block of Dudley Avenue in Perry Township
- 800 block of North Parker Avenue in Center Township
- 3700 block of Lafayette Road in Wayne Township
- 4000 block of East 21st Street in Center Township
- 1100 block of West Washington Street
- 7300 block of Camby Road in Decatur Township
- 2800 block of Sutherland Avenue in Center Township
- 3200 block of East 48th Street in Washington Township
- 7900 block of East 48th Street in Lawrence Township
- 3100 Thorneycroft Drive in Pike Township
- 5600 block of Kingsley in Washington Township
- 30th and Mitthoefer in Warren Township
- 1000 block of West Washington Street in Center Township
- 86th and Pennsylvania in Washington Township
- 11000 block of Maze Road in Franklin Township
- 96th and Fall Creek Road in Lawrence Township
- 3300 block of South Kentucky Avenue in Decatur Township
- 2000 block of South Bridgeport Road in Wayne Township
- 11000 block of East 56th Street in Lawrence Township
- 5900 block of South Oakcrest Drive in Franklin Township

**Are you interested in becoming more involved in your neighborhood?
Did you enjoy the Community Development Summit last October?**

Since the Summit, we have been busy following up on your ideas.

Join us! The Community Development Strategy Group presents
Summit Update: Action Recommendations
Thursday, October 20, 5 p.m.
Registration at 4:45 p.m.
Charles A. Tindley Accelerated School
3960 Meadows Drive

At the Summit Update, join us to learn about the draft action plan recommendations for future neighborhood development in Indianapolis and participate in a dialogue to add your ideas to the plan. In the months to follow, we will have more opportunity for community input preceded by a large roll-out event in January 2006.

- 6900 block of Bloomfield Drive in Franklin Township
- 7700 block of East Troy in Franklin Township
- 6700 block of Thompson Road in Franklin Township
- 4700 block of South Bridgeport Road in Decatur Township
- 9900 block of East Southport Road in Franklin Township
- 6100 block of Mooresville Road in Decatur Township
- 7201 Fishback Road in Pike Township



by Merri Anderson, Chair
Neighborhoods and the
Environment Committee,
and Glenn Pratt

Infrastructure Costs Going up. . . and up. . . But for Good Reason

While news that increases in sanitary and stormwater rates is reviled by some who just don't want to pay any more or who don't get it, it is also welcomed by many who have worked for years on getting adequate funding for needed improvements. However, history demands that we wait until we see the product before we actually endorse it.

It took not one but many attempts to get funding redefined and reorganized with a new ordinance for stormwater discharges. When the ordinance was passed in 2001, virtually everyone believed that the proposed \$2.95 fee (not tax) was going to go primarily toward building a new and improved drainage system. Later, the stormwater fee was reduced to \$1.25 a month and combined with a new \$1.94 sanitary sewer rate increase to raise money for what has become \$200 million for early projects while the disputed Long Term Control Plan required by EPA has been haggled over. To date, the plan eludes the city--and lawsuits, fines and more may face our citizens if it can't be resolved.

The corporate community, builders, real estate organizations, neighborhood associations, public health professionals, and city-county councilors themselves all thought the stormwater utility fee to bring about new capital projects, plus maintenance and upgrades on current infrastructure, is what was passed. Small details about paying back past debts slipped through, although mostly that is not the issue. However, when asked to endorse--again--up to \$3 monthly for stormwater and drainage projects, we asked where the approximate \$35 million that was previously collected has been spent. Many say they are still waiting for promised projects to materialize.

We learned that much has been spent: some legally on debt, some on more studies and consulting fees, and some on permit requirements. Out of the total \$35 million collected during the past three years, only about \$14 million has gone into infrastructure improvements. Before we sign off on an increase, we must be absolutely sure that it will result in addressing the current drainage complaints following a reasonable systematic process. That process is outlined in the Stormwater Master Plan. The plan must be followed.

In the new package of rate increases, there is only a \$1 increase for drainage; residents will pay an additional \$12 a year for each property. Business, commercial, industrial and all other property owners, including government and non-profit owned properties will also pay more based on the current formula. Property tax billing will continue to collect the fees.

Septic system replacement with public sanitary sewers is finally on the table after years of resistance from many sides. The City County Council tabled an



Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson, third from left, inserts third leg in three legged "birthing stool" to symbolize funding of septic program and elimination of Barrett process. Pictured from left to right are City County Councilor Lonnell (Kingro) Conley, Glenn Pratt, Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson, Marion County Health and Hospital Director Dr. Virginia Caine, Cornell Burriss, and Department of Public Works Director Jim Garrard.

ordinance almost two years ago that was fought out in the infamous debacle by outgoing Councilor Bainbridge shutting down fellow Republican and very experienced public infrastructure advocate Beulah Coughenour's offer. Four hundred citizens were turned away from this meeting, many voicing frustration and disbelief at this inaction after promises were made to hear the ordinance fairly.

Many homeowners fear defaulting on Barrett Law payments risks their homes to foreclosure, with good reason. It simply is too expensive for some homeowners to finance \$10,000 to \$15,000, even at lowest rates, to hook up their property to public sewers. But a 20-year plan to address 18,000 failing septic systems with publicly funded mains that residents can hook up to

at greatly reduced costs, plus dismantling the current Barrett Law process for installing sewers, is still too long for many to wait. And 18,000 is the lowest number--there are about 30,000 septic systems in the county, and in time, most will fail.

Time is of the essence in addressing this critical public health threat to many neighborhoods. Today, there are approximately 4,000 failing septic systems that need to be replaced now, not in a few years. The schedule needs to be accelerated. But at least we

know that the Indiana Department of Environmental Management will count these costs to the city as part of the necessary funding for the entire Water Quality program--so there is no reason not to finally get underway. Indianapolis cannot call itself a world-class city as long as our children are exposed to E-coli and more right in their own backyards, in drainage ditches and nearby streams.

Kevin Strunk

Sanitary sewer rates will double in three years and will continue to go up during the next 20

years to an estimated \$50 a month. That sounds like a lot, and for some, surely it is. But we will pay in funding improvements, or we will pay in federal fines and still have to fix overflows of human waste that foul our streams and rivers. Combined sewer overflows allow untreated raw sewage to be spilled into many inner-city and some suburban neighborhoods. Toilet contents hang in trees and line banks where pets and kids congregate. We must reduce overflows into the White River and nearby streams. It is the law. And it is the right thing to do.

But we must pick and choose the best practices and the most efficient processes. We must carefully monitor each fund to see that it is spent appropriately and as promised--and not allowed through a legal loop

hole. We must not be sold, nor accept another "pig in a poke," but must also stand behind these necessary increases--hard as it may be--so that our city and our citizens are safe, protected, and live as high a quality of life as possible.

McANA needs for you to learn about the ordinance and speak out at Public Works Committee and Board meetings. See www.indycleanstreams.org, read the data and arguments, and question what isn't clear. Then please contact your councilor to be sure he or she understands your concerns, sees that necessary amendments are added, and protects the funds from raiding and diversion. And your councilor must know that you support a good, comprehensive workable ordinance that raises our standard to one we are proud of--as proud as we seem to be of a new stadium that may or may not help our citizens some day. Please do your homework and have a voice in this big move into 20th Century infrastructure. Then we can sprint for the current century.

For more information, see [ww.indycleanstreams.org](http://www.indycleanstreams.org) or call the City Council office at 327-4242.

Public Works Committee and Public Works Board schedules:

October 20: Public Works Committee meeting at 5:30 p.m. in room 260 of City County Building to discuss proposal (proposal number and name unknown as of press time)

October 27: Public Works Committee meets again. If recommended, proposal is sent to City County Council with Do Pass vote.

October 24: McANA's Neighborhoods and the Environment Committee meets on October 24, 4 p.m., 1802 N. Illinois St.

October 31: City County Council votes on (possibly amended) proposal and if passed, it may be used to collect the increased stormwater fee portion based on November property tax assessments. However, until the proposal is introduced, we have no confirmation on this schedule.

Parks Should be Priority for Public Funding --and Well-Being

continued from page 1

While we must certainly have priorities in stretching limited public dollars to meet a growing population, we should not regard parks as a luxury. They provide health benefits in giving respite from the pressures of day-to-day living and motivation for much needed physical activity in an increasingly sedentary society. Parks provide educational opportunities to study the environment and cycles of life. The ecological benefits from rejuvenation of woods, streams and wildlife are (or should be) obvious to everyone, but should be considered more and more critically as we make greater demands on the environment not just in our city and state, but on a global scale.

There are also more subtle social benefits to enjoying the calming effects of "communing with nature" that engenders warmth and friendliness with those sharing the experience, even when they are complete strangers. There is something about the continuity of nature that connects us with the past and gives us hope for the future. Have you ever speculated with a cynical 17-year-old about how old that giant oak tree is and how many other people have sat beneath it enjoying its shade and fall color, talking about what is happening in his or her life while trying to dodge the falling acorns? That giant, durable, gnarled old oak tree that has survived the forces of nature, and sometimes the carelessness of man, kind of puts a lot of things in perspective.

If we are to maintain a truly healthy society, we must make provisions to preserve open space for future park land, encourage reclamation of natural areas, protect precious waterways and wooded areas, promote community involvement, and provide adequate funding to ensure that parks are vital and available to everyone. This is even more of a priority than ever as we continue to permit rapid and dense development and consume our finite land resources. This is not a community asset that we cannot afford to "do on the cheap"--not from a monetary standpoint and certainly not from our attitudes and approaches.

And now, I am going to go enjoy my time huddled in the cold around the campfire, trying to keep out of the way of the smoke and eating some more of those slightly singed marshmallows, grateful that someone before me had the foresight to make sure this park was here for generations to enjoy. Because in addition to all those lofty reasons for our society to continue to support our public parks, the truth is parks are just plain fun--something we all too often seem to lack in our lives.

6th Annual Family Strengthening Summit

FREE
Family Fun Event
Includes:
FREE admission
FREE lunch
FREE child care
Provided by Leslie Moore's

Saturday, November 19, 2005
9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Indiana Convention Center



Information on attending and volunteering:
Call 317.423.1770
E-mail Michael@communitysolutionsinc.net
Visit www.IndyFamilies.org
(Spanish interpreters available)

Family Strengthening Coalition



Stronger Families and Communities



A community event to celebrate families, share information, to hear and be heard by community leaders, and discover resources for your own family

- Celebrate Families
- Hear Good Ideas
- Be heard by Community Leaders
- Get Involved

- Entertainment
- Family Game Show
- Interactive Workshops
- Resource and Activity Booths with fun ways to get involved



Clarian Health Partners
Methodist, IU, Riley
In cooperation with the Clarian Health Plan

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www.mcanaindy.org

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 neighborhoods 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, October 15, 9-11 a.m.
General McANA membership meeting
North United Methodist Church, 38th and Meridian

Jim Gerrard, Director
Indianapolis Department of Public Works



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