

Spruce Hill Community Association

**PLEASE
TAKE OUR
RETAIL SURVEY**
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2013 Year in Review

BACK TO SCHOOL

By Monica Calkins, Chair,
Education Committee

For the last two years, the SHCA Education Committee has concentrated on the enrollment problems at Penn Alexander School (PAS) and the fact that the school cannot accommodate all the children in the catchment area who want to attend at various grade levels. This is a major issue that may be facing our community for years, and we have been in regular communication with the School District, the University of Pennsylvania and PAS, fighting for neighbors to have a voice in the decisions that are made. This fall, despite significant worry to the contrary, every child on the Penn Alexander waitlist for kindergarten was offered admission. We are participating in the creation of a newly established School Advisory Council at PAS; an SHCA delegate serves on the council as the community representative.

Our Education committee has also been part of the debate over the school funding crisis as it affects all Philadelphia public schools. We called on city and state officials to find a way to provide additional funding to the Philadelphia public schools, and participated in advocacy efforts of other community members

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TRICK OR TREAT!

Spruce Hill's Halloween Tot Parade has become a highly anticipated event each year for costume-clad kids and families. Logistics are a team effort with Spruce Hill Community Association coordinating with University City District and the frightfully friendly neighbors of Little Osage.



Annual Meeting

You are cordially invited to join us for our annual meeting at one of Spruce Hill's newest community spaces. Mingle, vote, and renew your dues.

What: Spruce Hill Annual Meeting

When: Tues, Nov 12 at 7pm

Where: 4501 Walnut St at the University City Chinese Christian Church

Featured Speaker:

Martine Decamp, planner for the University City/Southwest and Lower Southwest region

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GREENING GRANTS AVAILABLE FOR YOUR BLOCK

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WINE SHOP NOW OPEN

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HOT ZONING CASE

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

By Andy Lochrie, President

It's been a pleasure to serve as president of Spruce Hill Community Association this year.

Neighbors from every corner of Spruce Hill have stepped up to donate their time, their money, their voices, and their skills to help make this neighborhood a great place to live.

We've faced many frustrating challenges, but we've also come together to tackle those challenges head on.



This year alone, we've seen sweeping zoning changes, new property tax assessments, safety concerns, and public school upheaval that closed schools, moved boundaries, and threatened kindergarten access. We've also seen major change in the form of development, including numerous multimillion dollar construction projects that broke ground within or near our boundaries.

Through it all, I've pushed our committees, our neighboring institutions, and our government entities to be as inclusive as possible, as transparent as possible, and as collaborative as possible. We've reached out to nearby community associations to co-host events, our committees have brought neighbors and public officials together regarding education and zoning, and we've promoted numerous opportunities for the community to come out and be heard.

I've also asked that our board and our neighbors try to keep the discourse neighborly, because while we are all passionate about where we live, at the end of the day we're all neighbors too, and we'll all be together for a long time.

Spruce Hill is special for its diversity, for the people it brings together, and for the families who choose to make their home here. As our neighborhood grows and changes, it will be up to us to continue to step up, speak up, and contribute to this place we call home.

If you are passionate about this neighborhood, please join us – and don't lend just your great ideas, but also volunteer to help make your great ideas a reality. We'd love to have you.

The SHCA is governed by a five member Executive Board and a 20 member Board of Directors. See current list at sprucehillca.org/about/board-members

APPLY TO SPRUCE UP YOUR BLOCK

This year, UC Green's director, **Sue MacQueen**, joined our board and has brought new energy and expertise to our Greening Block Grant Program. To improve the streetscape in our neighborhood, Spruce Hill's Greening Block Grants encourage the planting and maintenance of street trees, the creation of tree lawns by removing concrete, and the installation of front gardens.

Grants up to \$500 for a single block and up to \$1,200 for cooperating adjacent blocks require a dollar-for-dollar match of the grant amount through volunteer "sweat equity," in-kind materials or services, or by cash donations. Recently a grant was awarded to spruce up the tot lot at the corner of 45th and Sansom.

To apply for a grant, please email the program's chair Sue MacQueen at suemacqueen@ucgreen.org.



BEFORE



DURING



AFTER

A Vision for the Future of Spruce Hill



In December 2012, Spruce Hill launched a planning process in conjunction with the city's **remapping and rezoning of lower southwest Philadelphia** in order to help shape the outcome.

A "Visioning Statement" and a set of "Placemaking Principles" emerged from the three public workshops, the first of which (pictured) was attended by 90 neighbors.

Conducted by a professional planner, the information gathered at these planning workshops will shape a new plan for Spruce Hill over the years to come.

View the resulting document at sprucehillca.org.

Mark your calendar

Martine Decamp, Philadelphia City Planning Commission's new planner for the University City/Southwest and Lower Southwest region, will be our featured speaker at our

Spruce Hill annual meeting. Martine will provide context for the city's remapping and rezoning effort stemming from the implementation of the new zoning code that went into effect in August 2012, and some insight into the Commission's thinking as it developed its recommendations for future development in the Spruce Hill neighborhood. This will be an opportunity for neighbors to ask questions and offer comments, understanding that there are many steps to climb before implementation becomes a reality. A constructive working relationship with our city planners can only enhance our community's ability to positively impact our development. Please take advantage of this opportunity to get acquainted by joining us on Tuesday, Nov. 12, 2013, at 7pm at the new University City Chinese Christian Church, 4501 Walnut St.

Bringing Crucial Tax Information to Neighbors

In March 2013, hundreds of neighbors came out to an informational town hall meeting on the property tax overhaul known as the **Actual Value Initiative (AVI)**. For many area residents this will mean higher tax payments in 2014.

Topics discussed included the Homestead Exemption and concerns about how the new assessments were made.

The panel included Chief Assessment Officer Richie McKeithen; Councilwoman Jannie Blackwell; economist Dr. Kevin Gillen; and moderator and reporter Patrick Kerkstra.

The heavily attended event was organized by several neighborhood associations, including Spruce Hill, Cedar Park Neighbors, Garden Court, Walnut Hill, and Woodland Terrace.

More info on assessments can be found at opa.phila.gov.



DEVELOPMENT IN SPRUCE HILL

By Barry Grossbach, Chair, Zoning Committee

RECENTLY COMPLETED



Fine Wine & Good Spirits Shop, S. 43rd and Chestnut Streets

After several years of discussion, debate, petition drives, and community meetings, the long-delayed wine and spirits shop is now a reality. The store is clean and bright, the staff pleasant and helpful, and the area safe and welcoming. A security arrangement, negotiated by Spruce Hill zoning with the property owner and the state and the University City District, provides car and bike patrols during the store's operating hours. Our thanks to all whose efforts made this neighborhood addition possible.



University City Chinese Christian Church, Corner of S. 45th and Walnut

When the Chinese Christian Church approached the association about purchasing this two-story cinder block building and converting it into a place for worship and classroom instruction, we engaged in a constructive conversation about changes to the exterior facade, which – to put it mildly – were in need of a serious aesthetic upgrade. We also held a series of meetings with the site's neighbors in the nearby Mosque and with area businesses to facilitate the blending of the richness of cultures that mark our community. There is general agreement that the church is a welcome neighborhood addition, both in its physical presence and for its architectural exterior enhancements.



4507 Kingsessing Avenue

This site, once a vacant lot due to a building collapse, now houses a residential structure that emerged from a series of meetings that stretched out over two years. The community worked with a responsible developer who made a good faith effort to satisfy the concerns of neighbors to construct a building that would harmonize with existing structures

Spruce Hill's zoning committee provides a forum for the community to weigh-in on developments that require zoning variances. To receive year-round updates on zoning issues and other neighborhood developments, please join Spruce Hill's email list: SHCA-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

PENDING DEVELOPMENTS

4224 Baltimore Avenue

No site in Spruce Hill has generated more speculation over the past few years than this empty lot across the street from Clark Park. The lot is owned by a corporate entity in New York and was given an "as of right" permit to construct 92 units with 6 parking spaces under current zoning. Two locals – Omar Blaik and Tom Lussenhop – persuaded the owner to give them an opportunity to serve as developers for 4224 through community engagement to see what alternative project might better serve the area's needs. The development team, u3Ventures, decided to engage the community from the ground up by inviting all interested parties to a series of community meetings to discuss possibilities for development. Three community meetings featured discussions around design and massing, housing components, commercial operations and transportation and parking issues. By the end of the process a general consensus emerged that housing should be varied, with space reserved for a set number of condominiums to accommodate neighborhood "down sizers" who wished to remain in University City and who looked forward to the prospect of living in a mixed use development. Spruce Hill is now waiting for the development team to finalize plans for the next stage – one in which the association's zoning committee will hold open meetings to examine and comment on the project's plans and offer its recommendation to the Spruce Hill board. We will keep you posted.

HUB 2, S. 40th and Chestnut

This project was first approved by the zoning committee in 2008, but financing became an issue in the face of the recession. Certain modifications were made in design and size in 2013, and the zoning committee gave its approval with a letter of understanding signed by the parties stipulating that discussions on exterior facade materials would continue to the satisfaction of both.

Corner of S. 40th and Pine

This seemingly never ending development continues on. After much negotiation, the Spruce Hill board approved the demolition of the existing vacant structure and the construction of a five story residential student housing complex. The demolition and zoning variances were approved by the Historical Commission and the Zoning Board of Adjustment respectively, but opposed neighbors have challenged both decisions and the matter is now tied up in the courts. In October, our zoning committee received a preliminary outline of a new proposal from the site's developer, and the committee will discuss the plan at its next scheduled zoning committee meeting on Monday, November 25. Interested parties are invited to attend to ask questions and offer comments.

Corner of S. 43rd and Sansom

The committee spent several sessions working through the details of a proposed four story housing development on this currently vacant lot. In addition to requesting significant architectural design changes to the structure, the committee insisted on having a commercial component

added to this development with first floor retail space along the 43rd Street side. The property owners expect to break ground next Spring with occupancy scheduled for June 2015.

Watusi II, Corner of S. 45th and Locust

This bar has been a source of neighborhood discontent for some time, negatively impacting the quality of life for those living in the surrounding community. Spruce Hill pulled together a meeting in August with neighbors and city officials to address the problem, and I am pleased to report that city officials have been tremendously supportive and helpful. The bar is currently closed due to the owner's failure to be current in payment of his business license, and we are in touch almost daily with city personnel to monitor future happenings. There will no doubt be "ups and downs" with this property and the other two bars owned by the same individual (Watusi I and Third World Lounge), but we are determined to stick with this until the community no longer fears that peace and tranquility is just a momentary state.

Other Items

We have a number of additional items on our zoning horizon, but they are in the early formative stages. They include housing unit construction, tattoo parlors, and culinary related operations. More to come.

Please feel free to email me about all zoning-related matters at b.grossbach@gmail.com

What new retail would you most like to see in Spruce Hill?

By Lee Huang, Chair, Business Attraction Committee

Retail is an important part of a neighborhood's sense of vitality, safety, and identity. Where people choose to shop is, of course, a personal decision, as is where merchants choose to locate, what they choose to sell, and how they choose to keep up their storefronts. However, we make better choices when we are better informed: about what's out there to buy, about what people want to buy, and about how our choices have an impact on others and on the neighborhood and world in which we live.

The Spruce Hill Community Association (SHCA) Business Association Committee (BAC) was formed this year to do three things in support of SHCA's efforts to improve the quality of life in our neighborhood. First, we try to keep an ear to the pulse of what the neighborhood wants and doesn't want in terms of storefronts. Second, we seek to be a point of

contact for developers, landlords, and businesses who want to know what the neighborhood thinks and wants. Third, we actively network with other neighborhood-serving groups that are trying to do the same kinds of things.

One of our first official actions is to conduct a survey of retail preferences. **You can complete this 10-question survey online at www.sprucehillca.org/retail-survey or email shca.bac@gmail.com to request a copy.** Hard copies of the survey are also available at several local businesses, including but not limited to Aksum, Earth Cup, Gold Standard, and Kaffa Crossing. Please

participate so we can best understand your interests and opinions. And please consider joining SHCA and/or BAC if you are interested in helping out on this issue. Thank you in advance for your consideration.



Spruce Hill Community Association is a proud financial supporter of:

- Clark Park
- Shakespeare in Clark Park
- Youth soccer in Clark Park
- The Halloween Tot Parade
- Mel-Lo Neighborhood Halloween treats
- The Bird Sanctuary
- Penn Alexander School
- Penn Alexander School play
- The Parent-Infant Center
- St. Mary's Nursery School
- HMS School
- Friends of University of the Sciences scholarships
- Curio Theater
- University City Arts League
- University City Garden Club
- UC Green
- Neighborhood greening projects
- The Red Cross for Windermere fire victims
- The Enterprise Center



BACK TO SCHOOL

continued from page 1

and organizations. We have been communicating with the neighborhood via the SHCA list-serve about ways that neighbors could become involved in advocacy efforts.

We closely followed the PSD decision to close the Wilson School and transfer some of its students to Lea. Many of you may recall that the Education Committee spearheaded a fund-raising drive several years back to install much-needed play equipment at the Wilson playground. SHCA has been working

with the West Philadelphia Coalition for Neighborhood Schools and the district to have this play equipment reinstalled at Lea as part of the improvements to Lea's playground.

Finally, thanks to the generous support of the Spruce Hill community, we raised about \$2,500 in a special appeal to help PAS replace a large window that was apparently the victim of vandalism over the summer break. With the school funding crisis, PAS was having trouble paying for it and

requested our help. We felt it was important not to let a single act of vandalism jeopardize the use of PAS's grounds as a community play area after school hours. The window has been fixed – our thanks to all who contributed!

If you'd like to join our education committee, please email Eric Santoro, eric.scott.santoro@gmail.com, who will take over as Education Chair in 2014.

A FINE DAY FOR SPRUCE HILL'S MAY FAIR IN CLARK PARK

We continued the more than 50 year tradition of May Fair in Clark Park this year, and despite some early morning threats of rain, the sky brightened to a beautiful day. Thanks to everyone who came out and contributed to this event, which doubles as our annual Spruce Hill fundraiser.

The festivities included lively music by local bands, food from some of the top vendor trucks in University City, and many high-quality crafts by local artists and crafters — ideal for Mother's Day and graduation gifts.

Volunteers hosted popular games for kids, including an obstacle course and a bounce tent. And for the parents, there was another huge used book sale and also a plant sale put on by the University City Garden Club. Many local groups were also on hand to promote their causes at information tables.

The raffle was a hit with dozens of prizes from local merchants and a grand prize from University Pinball Family Fun Center of an iPad 4, which the winner generously donated to the Penn Alexander School.

Spruce Hill Community Association is Grateful to These Corporate Supporters

- University Pinball & Family Fun Center
- Central City Toyota
- University City Science Center
- The Restaurant School at Walnut Hill College
- Apartments at Penn
- Posel Management Company
- HMS School
- University of the Sciences in Philadelphia
- Fairfax Apartments
- The Green Line
- Constellar Corporation
- Campus Apartments
- Jeff "City" Block
- University City Garden Club
- New Horizons Housing, LLC
- Herman Realty Group Inc./ University Enterprises
- Lussenhop Redevelopment & Services
- Wayne's Garage
- Best House Pizzeria
- Travelers Aid
- Fulwider Corporation





Spruce Hill Membership Application/Renewal

Become a member with the form below or online at sprucehillca.org/donate

Return This Form with Check to:

Spruce Hill Community Association
257 S. 45th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

☐ New Member ☐ Renewal ☐ Multi-Year: ____ years (4 years max)

☐ \$20 Individual/Family (\$35 for 2 years)

☐ \$10 Senior/Student/Unemployed (\$15 for 2 years)

☐ \$35 Business/Commercial (\$65 for 2 years)

☐ \$50 Sponsor

☐ \$100 Patron

☐ \$300 Lifetime

Additional Contribution: (enter dollar amount) \$ _____

All new and renewing members will receive a Spruce Hill Community Association door decal while supplies last.

The Spruce Hill Community Association has provided a voice for local residents for more than 50 years. Join SHCA and help us to preserve, protect and improve Spruce Hill. Membership is open to individuals, business or professional offices, and institutions with an interest in Spruce Hill.



PARTICIPATE

Become a member

sprucehillca.org/donate

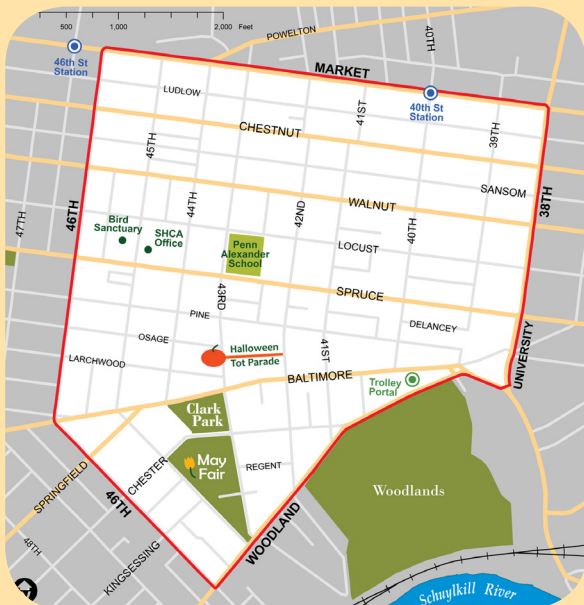


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Take our retail survey
sprucehillca.org/retail-survey



Where is Spruce Hill?

Spruce Hill is located within the University City area of West Philadelphia and is bounded by Market Street, Woodland Avenue, South 38th Street, and South 46th Street.



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