



Spring 2003

SEUNA Update



Southeast University Neighborhood Association, Inc. ~ P.O. Box 6658, Syracuse, NY 13217 ~ email@seuna.org

SU Gets Its Way with Hookway

For forty years, neighbors near the Hookway Tract north of East Colvin have successfully fought off a succession of development proposals — everything from apartment complexes to a Wegman's mega-grocery store. But the neighborhood finally met its match in April when the Common Council voted to give Syracuse University the go ahead for construction of five new athletic fields on the Hookway lands.

Only one common councilor voted against SU's plan: 5th district councilor Bill Simmons. Those who voted for the change include councilors-at-large Stephanie Miner, Katharine O'Connell, Joanne Mahoney, and Van Robinson; also democrats Martin Masterpole, Rory McMahon, Michael Atkins and republican Steven DeRegis.

SU says work on the practice fields will start in May and will be completed by October. During construction the entire area will be fenced in.

Neighbors are now bracing for the construction dust and noise soon to come. After that they will be learning to live with the 9 to 12, 40-50 foot high light poles SU says it needs to illuminate the fields. Potential drainage problems also have residents worried.

But what troubles neighbors most is the change in zoning. For more than half a century, the undeveloped Hookway Tract has been under the city's most restrictive zoning designation: Residential A-1. Only single family residences and religious institutions are allowed under this zoning. The Hookway area will now be zoned "Planned Institutional District" (PID). This is the same zoning found at the Manley Field house, the city's hospitals and much of the SU campus. PID zoning allows: schools, hospitals, care homes, commercial schools, day care centers, fraternities and sororities. If SU wanted to build any of these facilities at Hookway they would first have to bring an amendment of the PID before both the Planning Commission



SU says lower Hookway will continue to be available for neighborhood use

and the Common Council. But this isn't much of an impediment — SU has repeatedly amended its PID for the nearby Manley Field house with little difficulty.

Leading the fight to oppose the plan was Sarah Parsons and the steering committee of the Alliance for the Preservation of Neighborhoods (APN). APN was formed more than thirty years ago in response to

the first development proposal for Hookway. SEUNA and APN spoke out against the plan at the Planning Commission hearing. They also wrote and called common councilors to express their views. APN filed a "protest petition," with the city, signed by 80% of those who own properties adjoining Hookway, requiring a super-majority in the Common Council to

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Students Join in Earth Day Cleanup

About half a dozen residents and nearly 40 students turned out on a drizzly Saturday morning, April 26th, to pick up litter in the University neighborhood as part of an Earth Day clean up.

The impressive turnout of SU students this year was due to the involvement of the Office of Off-Campus Student Services (OOCSS) and the Office of Government & Community Relations at SU. Laura Madelone, director of the OOCSS publicized the event to students.

One sorority saw this as a good way to

do community work, donning gloves they brought and special orange vests furnished by the Onondaga Resource Recovery Agency.

To inject some fun, Marisa Craybas from Community Relations administered a quiz to groups of students as they worked. Students who answered questions about SU correctly received a prize.

At the end of the day, over 40 bags of trash were picked up by specially deployed DPW trucks.

College Town USA

We are not alone. Other college neighborhoods across the country are struggling to find the right balance between students and permanent residents. Almost two-thirds of all undergraduates in the country now live off campus. Some college neighborhoods have found ways of managing this “studentification.” Other neighborhoods, like ours, are still searching for answers.

This is the first in a series of articles that will focus on steps being taken in other communities to address quality of life issues in near-campus neighborhoods.

Binghamton, NY

Much like the SEUNA area, Binghamton’s “West Side” neighborhood, near Binghamton University, is a mature neighborhood of older single-family homes set on graceful, tree-lined streets.

The West Side Neighborhood Association (WSNA) was born in 1999 out of a concern that the increasing student population was undermining neighborhood quality of life. According to WSNA board member John Arthur, “Families have been driven out of the neighborhood and faculty members do not want to move to the West Side because of the



potential problems with students.”

WSNA’s primary concern has been safety. The area’s single family infrastructure and homes were never designed to accommodate the number of students moving there. Many single- and two-family homes were being converted to multi-resident boarding houses without installing proper safety measures like fire escapes and sprinkler systems. Also, the wiring in older single-family homes is often inadequate to meet the demands of multiple student occupants, each with their own microwave oven, hairdryer and audio system.

The basic problem was that these homes, zoned for single-family use, were no longer being occupied by families.

In the late 1980’s the City Council passed a zoning ordinance prohibiting occupancy of “dwelling units” zoned “single family” by anyone other than a family or the “functional and factual equivalent” of a family. The city used several criteria to determine whether a group of residents functioned as a family. Primarily, they asked whether occupants share the entire dwelling unit or act as separate roomers, and whether the household has stability akin to a permanent family structure.

Although the “functional and factual equivalent” test has been upheld in both Broome County and higher New York State courts, the ordinance was seldom enforced.

In 1998 the City Council enacted a revision to the ordinance. It exempted groups of three or fewer residents from the family or factual equivalent test. With this revision, the city of Binghamton finally started to enforce the single-family ordinance. Landlords with more than three student residents in a household were required to reduce the number of tenants or face legal consequences.

The newly revised ordinance was put to the test in the fall of 2000 when a judge ordered 23 Binghamton University students evicted from their West Side houses at the end of the semester because they did not meet the factual or functional family definition.

The Zoning Board pointed out that even though the functional family equivalent standard arose to accommodate the needs of non-traditional families in the 20th century, “it would fly in the face of common sense (even in the era of evolving family standards) to find that a group of students who meet during college or barely know each other, living together for, at most, two years, are the functional and factual family equivalent just because they share a kitchen, a bath-

room, and the occasional meal together.”

The legal challenge was lost and the students were evicted, but the case prompted an amendment to Binghamton’s R-1 zoning law, shifting more of the burden of proof from the city to the tenant. Other university cities such as Ithaca, Poughkeepsie, Oneonta and Albany now have similar zoning laws.

Letters to the editor in Pipe Dream, B.U.’s student newspaper, accused the city of waging a campaign against students. A spokesman for the Mayor’s office disagreed “This decision simply reinforces the integrity of a single-family neighborhood,” he said, “and isn’t anti-student.”



Today the University of Binghamton’s Off-Campus Center warns students about renting houses in neighborhoods zoned R1 and R2. Students are told to check the zoning district before they rent a house because unrelated individuals living together in these zoning areas must meet a “functional family equivalency.” A list of the criteria is provided, with the caution “...you could be at risk of eviction.”

In a letter to Pipe Dream, WSNA president Amy Shapiro put it this way. “We in the West Side Neighborhood Association are happy to have students here — it would be a much duller place without you! We also want to see the laws of the city enforced.”

Hookway (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

pass SU's proposal (seven out of nine votes).

About the defeat, Parsons said: "We really wanted the common council to demonstrate that the preservation of our neighborhood was a high priority; unfortunately, this vote says something different."

Although the battle's been lost, the fight isn't over. In the coming weeks neighbors will need to monitor the university's implementation of its plan.

Here are the main features:

1. Five formal practice fields at Upper Hookway, all enclosed with fencing but only two lighted and irrigated
2. Restroom facilities (350 sq. ft max.) and storage facilities (350 sq. ft max.)
3. Parking lot for 60 cars along Colvin Street.
4. Locked, chain-link fencing around the five practice fields
5. 10-12 field poles, each 40-50 feet tall, with luminaires
6. 2 rows of 6'-8' tall evergreen trees planted at the eastern edge, approximately 250 feet north, to diffuse light from the flood lights; the buffer is to be approximately 200 feet wide between the eastern edge of the fields and Westmoreland properties.
7. 20-foot trees will be planted along Colvin Street and a sidewalk will be built for the property frontage along Colvin, with a hedge adjacent to it inside the property line.
8. The lights illuminating the fields are to be used only between April and mid-November; lights are to be turned off no later than 8:30 pm.

If you notice any deviation from the above, please report these to SEUNA. In particular, please let us know if you notice any of the following:

- Lights that stay on after 8:30 p.m.
- Lights that are used before April 1 or after mid-November
- Excessive light spillage onto neighboring properties
- Flooding of basements near the fields (fields are designed to drain to the

northwest)

- Excessive noise coming from the fields at any time of day
- Increased parking or traffic on Buckingham, Westmoreland and other streets due to Hookway field activity
- Problems from pesticides, either air- or water-borne
- More than 60 cars in the Colvin St. parking lot;
- Lights erected in the parking lot.
- Installation of "squawk boxes" to scare pigeons off the fields (this form of sound pollution is already used on the fields at Manley.)
- Competition between local teams and SU students for use of the unfenced fields at Sherman and Barry Park for pick-up games.

SEUNA Notes...

Sidewalks

Summer is a good time to do sidewalk construction. If you notice a sidewalk that needs to be replaced, you can report it by calling 448-CITY, or by going to www.zerodeflectsyr.com and filling out the online complaint form. In the pull-down menu of complaints, be sure to select "Sidewalk broken/hazardous."

Block Captains

SEUNA would like to re-establish the block captain system for dealing with problems on a local level while fostering communication among neighbors. A block captain on each block could help report broken sidewalks, trash and litter problems, and other code violations. Would you like to be a block captain for your block? No meetings are required; you can use your phone and/or the Internet to communicate with neighbors and the city. SEUNA will furnish you with a "kit" that contains information about city ordinances and whom to contact with complaints. Please call Harry Lewis at 472-3110 for more information.

Sundays on Meadowbrook Drive

Once again, SEUNA has been instrumental in arranging for Meadowbrook Drive to be closed to traffic on Sundays from May 25 to August 31. Neighbors enjoy walking, running, biking and rollerblading on car-free Meadowbrook. Barry Park with its playground, tennis courts and other amenities is nearby.

SEUNA Joins Credit Union

As a member of SEUNA, you are eligible to become a member of the Syracuse Cooperative Federal Credit Union (SCFCU), a local institution operated for the mutual benefit of its members. Services include: savings, checking, and money market accounts, direct deposit, Visa check cards with ATM access, savings certificates and IRA accounts, money orders, travelers checks, plus electronic and wired transactions. Hours are noon to 6:00 p.m. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays; noon to 4:00 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays. Web address: www.syrcoopfcu.org.

WRVO: Past, Present and Future

General manager John E. Krauss will speak about WRVO-FM's history and future plans, followed by a Q & A period with WRVO staff. For details call John Oldfield at 475-6251. Westcott Community Center, Wednesday evening, June 18, at 7 pm.

- Restrooms and storage buildings that are not of a form or scale similar to "neighboring residential buildings."

The neighborhood must also remain alert to proposed amendments to the PID. In the twelve years since the Manley Field house PID was established there have been eight amendments. These included additional fields, additions to existing buildings, bleachers, sound systems, and the addition of 80-foot poles for lighting at Coyne Field.

If you receive a notice from the city regarding changes to the Hookway PID, please contact SEUNA. We may need to mobilize neighbors to address the proposed changes.

SU has set up a website detailing the Hookway development plan. To take a look, go here:

<http://sunews.syr.edu/hookway/index.html>

Your SEUNA Board

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Recent Neighborhood House Sales

As published in the Syracuse Post-Standard

Date Pub-lished	Purchaser Name	Address	Sale Price
Jan. 31	Jennifer E. Engliss & Edward Toombs	334 Miles Avenue	\$50,000
Jan. 16	Jennifer Walters	855 Maryland Avenue	\$180,000
Feb. 6	Kim E. Burch	311 Kensington Road	\$74,500
March 2	Fergal McCaul	111 Circle Road	\$149,000
March 13	Cecilia F. Huges & Patrick R. Owens	113 Meadowbrook Drive	\$86,233
March 30	Stephanie Smart	1048 Westcott Street	\$54,000

Visit Our New Website

SEUNA has a new website. Check on upcoming events, read background on neighborhood issues and view past issues of *SEUNA Update*. You can even look for your home on our 1924 map of the neighborhood.

WWW.SEUNA.ORG

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