



Winter 2006

SEUNA Update



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

Petition signatures: 500 and counting

Late last Fall, 20 SEUNA board members and volunteers set off across our neighborhood to collect signatures on two petitions. The response was overwhelmingly positive and by the time the snows started falling we had collected 500 signatures on each of the petitions.

The major difficulty with any door-to-door effort is finding people at home. In a few weeks, when Spring weather arrives, we plan to head out again to catch those homeowners we missed in the Fall.

Can you spare a weekend afternoon? Want to help us collect signatures? Give us a call and we'll tell you which households on your street haven't yet been asked to sign – you can help us to fill in the gaps. All the materials you'll need are available at our website: www.seuna.org.

Petition 1:

Build new apartment-style housing for juniors and seniors

We request that the City of Syracuse, SU and SUNY-ESF collaborate to develop new apartment-style housing appropriate for undergraduate students.

We suggest that this new housing be built either on campus, or near campus, in areas already zoned to allow for multi-unit housing development.

The goal should be to house at least 90% of all SU and ESF undergraduates in university sponsored housing within five years.

New student housing projects are springing up on or near campuses all across the country, but most of these new projects don't look much like your father's college dormitory. In fact, they resemble apartment buildings more than "residence halls."

This new type of student housing is typically built with the university's

guidance and cooperation. But the university often doesn't pick up the tab, and it often doesn't own the finished project.

New apartment-style housing on U. Hill will provide area students with better accommodations. It will also reduce the demand for off-campus student housing that continues to absorb single-family homes near campus, converting them to rental properties.

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200 attend University East House Tour



About 200 visitors attended last October's Fifth Annual University East House Tour, jointly sponsored by SEUNA and the Preservation Association of Central New York (PACNY).

This year's event featured homes in Berkeley Park, a 40-acre residential subdivision established in 1911, and the city's most recently established local historic district.

Most of the houses in Berkeley Park were constructed during the decade following World War I and many of the city's leading architects of that time designed homes here, including Ward Wellington Ward, Dwight Baum, Albert Brockway and Gordon Wright.

You can learn more about the Berkeley Park area at the PACNY website: SyracuseThenAndNow.net

About to tour 901 Comstock, from left, Syracuse Economic Development Director, David Michel (whose house was also included in the tour); Syracuse Mayor Mathew Driscoll; SEUNA President, Michael Stanton.

Two new city ordinances

Over the last two years SEUNA's board of directors has sat down to informal meetings with elected officials at the city, county, state and federal level. We have met with all the Syracuse Common Council members, our representatives in the State Legislature, even Congressman James Walsh.

We've explained to our elected representatives that our neighborhood continues to lose owner-occupied housing, particular near the university. We've also discussed various measures that could be taken to strengthen owner-occupancy in the neighborhood southeast of Syracuse University.

That groundwork is beginning to pay off. This year the city passed two major pieces of legislation that should make a significant contribution to the quality of life in our neighborhood.

The Certificate of Sufficiency

Last year the city passed a new regulation requiring that all absentee owned rentals in the university special district be inspected every three years. The process leading up to passage of this measure started with a meeting with the mayor.

Last March, five board members each from SEUNA and WENA (the Westcott East Neighborhood Association) arranged a private meeting at a neighborhood home with Mayor Matt Driscoll.

We reminded the mayor that this was an election year and that our neighborhood has traditionally been a Democratic stronghold. But, we told him, quality of life issues are crucial in our

area, and these are not being adequately addressed. We said voters are likely to support whichever mayoral candidate they believed would most effectively address quality of life issues in our area.

(As not-for-profit organizations, neither SEUNA nor WENA can legally endorse candidates for public office).

We discussed with the mayor the major problems facing our area: housing

One landlord told the Daily Orange that his rental properties hadn't been inspected by the city for over 30 years.

code violations, overcrowded rentals, the difficulty families have competing with landlords when homes come on the market, an overabundance of cars leading to backyard parking lots and frequent parking violations, noise and disruptive parties.

WENA led a discussion on sidewalk snow removal, a topic SEUNA has also been very vocal about. Every year area residents end up walking in the streets because a few homeowners don't shovel their sidewalks. Every year the problem is discussed while the snow is falling, then it disappears when the snows melt. Yet another winter has nearly passed and we still have not seen any progress on this issue.

The mayor took particular note when we told him that most rentals in our area go for years without a code or fire inspection. This is in contrast to university dormitories and even fraternities and sorority houses that are required to have a fire code inspection twice a year. One landlord told a Daily Orange reporter last year that his properties hadn't been inspected by the city for over 30 years ago.

In 1991 the city set up the University Special District in an effort to reverse the loss of owner-occupied housing in the area. Within this district all absentee owned rentals were required to obtain a Certificate of Suitability specifying which parts of the house could be offered as living space and which rooms could be offered as bedrooms. A city inspection was required prior to issuance of the Certificate of Suitability and it had to be renewed every five years.

Our research found that this process had broken down significantly. A good example was what we found at 813 Comstock.

813 Comstock was burglarized over Thanksgiving vacation in 1994. It provided one of those rare opportunities to find out what is happening inside a rental.

Police found that all seven bedrooms had been broken into -- yes seven, not the legal limit of five for unrelated adults. When SEUNA looked into the history of this house we found that it had done business illegally, without even applying for a Certificate of Suitability, from 1991 until 1997. It applied for and received a certificate in 1997. This certificate expired in 2002 and the landlord then continued to operate without a valid certificate from 2002 to 2004.

The Certificate of Suitability for 813 Comstock clearly stated that no room on the first floor could be used as a bedroom. But the police investigating the Thanksgiving burglary found one of the "bedrooms" broken into was on the first floor. (A year later fliers for this house were posted on campus addressed to 'groups of any size').

The mayor said he would take our con-

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cerns and suggestions back and discuss them with his department heads.

In June of last year SEUNA and WENA representatives were invited to a follow-up meeting with the mayor and his department heads at City Hall. We were given a broad outline of the new legislation they had in mind. The new ordinances ultimately passed, unanimously, by the Common Council several months later strayed little from this original presentation. Here are the major features of the new ordinance:

1. Certificates of Suitability will continue to be issued when a house first becomes an absentee owned rental, but there will now be no expiration date for the certificate. The stipulations of the certificate will remain in effect indefinitely. This is not much of a change since the city was routinely renewing Certificates of Suitability without a new inspection. The Certificate of Suitability will now be reviewed and reissued only if code enforcement determines there have been structural changes made to the house relevant to the certificate.
2. In addition to the Certificate of Suitability, a new *Certificate of Sufficiency* will now also be required. This new certificate will be awarded only when a property has been inspected by city personnel to ensure that requirements of the Certificate of Suitability are being observed. Inspectors will also be looking for evidence of any fire or housing code violations, including over-occupancy. If the property is found to be in violation of the Certificate of Suitability, or any other city code, the Certificate of Sufficiency cannot be issued until the violations are remedied.
3. Rental property owners will be charged a fee to help cover the cost of inspection and enforcement.

The charge will be \$45 for a single family home; \$55 for a two family home; for structures with three or more units the charge will be \$55 plus an additional \$20 for every unit beyond two.

4. Every rental property must be re-inspected and recertified every three years.
5. When we saw an initial draft of the measure we asked that the language be strengthened to make it unequivocally clear that rentals cannot be occupied when there is no current Certificate of Sufficiency. This language has been put

When a police officer leaves one party to respond to another, the excesses often resume as soon as the officer is out of sight.

in place, now we have to see that the city enforces it.

The Nuisance Party Ordinance

The city's new Nuisance Party ordinance had its origins in a meeting between SEUNA, SU's director of Off-Campus Student Services, Laura Madelone, and Lt. Joe Cecile of the Syracuse Police Department.

Laura had learned about nuisance party ordinances through her contacts at other universities. Lt. Cecile reviewed the measure and thought it would help local police better manage out of control parties throughout the city, but particularly in the University area.

Local police tell us that dealing with student parties on a weekend evening is difficult and time consuming. There are often many parties on a given evening but officers only have time to visit two or three at most. When a police officer leaves one party to respond to another, the excesses often resume as

soon as the officer is out of sight.

Lt. Cecile says that the city's new noise ordinance was effective for a while as a tool for party control. Eventually party organizers realized that if they just kept the stereo volume down the police would have no reason to intervene, with even very large gatherings.

The nuisance party ordinance allows police to step in when parties result in negative consequences for the neighborhood — not just noise. The list of nuisance party indicators includes: public urination or defecation, disorderly conduct, drug use, unlawful sale of alcohol, providing alcohol to minors, property damage, blocking traffic and unlawful pedestrian or vehicle traffic.

Where police officers would often leave a party knowing it would just ramp up again, the police can now declare an out-of-control party a "nuisance party" and order everyone who doesn't live at that address to immediately leave. Both tenants and property owners may be ticketed and fined for nuisance parties.

The first Nuisance Party ordinance we examined was from Raleigh, North Carolina. Our research soon turned up other nuisance ordinances in Oxford OH., Athens, OH, Bowling Green KY, and other college towns.

The Corporation Counsel's office looked for instances where Nuisance Party ordinances had been challenged in other cities. They then adopted language for Syracuse's ordinance that had withstood challenge elsewhere.

Measures that manage; measures that change.

Taken together, the new Certificate of Suitability and Nuisance Party Ordinance represent the most important improvements in the regulation of the rental in-

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SU survey finds little optimism

In 2004, following Nancy Cantor's inauguration as Chancellor, Syracuse University conducted an online survey of faculty and staff living in the university area. Last year university officials shared a summary of the results of this survey with neighborhood groups. We are now sharing this summary with you.

The SU summary says at the outset, "Responses overall were negative, indicating a general dissatisfaction in sharing the neighborhood with students."

It appears the university has taken these results to heart. You'll see elsewhere in this newsletter that since this survey was completed SU has been working with neighborhood groups in a way we've never seen before. Progress has definitely been made, but much remains to be done.

There were 221 responses to the survey representing about 35% of those asked to participate. Eighty percent were homeowners; 90% percent live within 14 blocks of campus; 25% live within four blocks.

One out of every four respondents reported they were a SEUNA member.

Respondents were asked for the main reason they chose to live in the university neighborhood. The summary offered this as typical of the replies that were given: "Character of the homes and neighborhood, the quality of living that used to exist when we first moved here."

Forty percent of respondents reported they had contacted the Syracuse Police department during the previous 12 months. Almost two thirds (62%) said their concerns were not satisfactorily resolved. Fifty-nine percent said they had contacted the police more than once during the year while eleven percent said they had contacted the police more than ten times — issues most often mentioned were "loud party", "noise", "open con-

tainer violation" and "large gathering of students".

These are some representative comments about Syracuse Police response:

- "In some cases, the parties and loud gatherings (sometimes up to 100 students) would continue after the police leave..."
- "Illegal parking has never been resolved. Slow responses to requests."

Respondents were asked to rate the impact each item had on neighborhood quality of life. A 1 to 10 scale where "1" was most negative and "10" was most positive.

Here are average responses:

Pedestrian traffic	6.2
Economic impact	6.0
Crime	4.1
Parking	2.7
Traffic/Speeding	2.6
Trash	2.6
Overall average	3.8

- "Police arrived too late to stop anything."
- "Police frequently ignore or are slow to respond."
- "The police often have other more serious violations to attend to so they are usually slow in responding — when they do respond in time they are very effective."
- "Generally the police do come, the problem is that the events recur so frequently."

Twenty-two percent said they had contacted a city department other than the police. The departments most frequently contacted were the Department of Public

Works and Code Enforcement.

These are representative comments about the response from these other city departments:

- "Saw no response at all."
- "Situation still exists."
- "Snow/trash concerns left unresolved."
- "It still happens routinely."
- "...One of the frustrating things about living here is that one gathers that 'permanent' residents have acquired the reputation of being difficult; one senses that not all of our complaints are taken seriously. Or perhaps they are simply overwhelmed by our complaints."

Twelve percent reported contacting Syracuse University during the previous 12-months. Of this group, 72% reported their concerns were not satisfactorily resolved.

These are representative comments about the response from the university:

- "Difficult to assess. There was some change in student behavior in specific cases, but it is short-lived due to the transient situation of students. There is no personal feedback to the complainant that I am aware of."
- "The university public safety department referred us to the Syracuse Police. They don't consider it their job to enforce the law against fireworks, or even to talk to the students."
- "The response from the University was that was the pattern that had been settled on in discussions with the city and that essentially my opinion from my personal observations was not worthwhile."

Additional Comments from the SU survey

- “Having lived close to several other universities and thoroughly enjoyed my experience, it is disappointing to see the lack of care and attention both landlords and students have for the broader community in Syracuse.”
- “The neighborhood is being over-run by cars. The neighborhood was not built to accommodate five cars per household. The students are generally inconsiderate of their neighbors and the architectural quality of the homes is being destroyed by landlords.”
- “It is not the students but the landlords that have a negative impact as they fail to care for their properties or set out expectations that their renters will care for the properties.”
- “...The overcrowding, the illegal parking, the tolerance of loud parties all could be fixed by limiting the number of students in a single family house to 3...Many of the parking problems would not be if there were only 3 cars to a house.”
- “Balance is significant; areas with a mixture of students and permanent residents fare better than those that are exclusively or predominantly student.”
- “We propose that SU urgently examine its role in the community, not only for the residents’ sake but for its own, assuming it wishes to continue telling its potential students and faculty that it is an urban university in a stable and safe neighborhood.”
- “Large numbers of homeowners have left already. If SU doesn’t aggressively address the stability and safety of its surroundings soon, even those of us who are devoted to the neighborhood will—reluctantly—move out as well.”
- “Strict enforcement of parking rules; strict control of absentee landlords and their willingness to let houses deteriorate.”
- “The students are an integral part of the neighborhood and we all need to learn to live and share our space in a congenial and civil manner — however, it may be difficult to convince all of the students of their responsibilities while living in a crowded rented space away from home!”
- “Thank you for your continued interest in fostering the healthy, mutually beneficial relationship between town and gown, community and campus.”

Petitions

(Continued from page 1)

It’s a win-win situation for students, neighbors and the university as well.

Petition 2: *Reduce Density in Student Rental Housing*

The current limit in city code of no more than five (5) unrelated adults per residential dwelling is too high.

We request that the limit be changed to no more than three (3) unrelated adults per residential dwelling, with the exception of groups of unrelated adults who live together in a way similar to a family.

In 1991 the city established the

“university special district” and set a city-wide limit of no more than five unrelated persons per residential housing unit. SEUNA held out for a lower limit, landlords wanted no limit, five was the compromise.

In the years since it has become apparent that the limit was set too high. The effect of this mistake has been felt in the neighborhood in two ways.

Overcrowding. There was a time when many students in our neighborhood got by without a car, walking or taking mass transit. Those days are over. Students today typically come with their own car — often an SUV.

Five students in a residence means five cars struggling to park in the same narrow driveway. The result is cars parked on front lawns or over sidewalks. Increasingly, it means back-

yards leveled, paved and converted to parking lots.

Rental Conversions. With four or more students per unit, area houses are worth more as commercial property than as single-families homes — the purpose our neighborhood is zoned for. Twice in the past year Berkeley Park neighbors have tried to buy back houses that had recently been converted to rentals. Their offers were dismissed out of hand because, although they were competitive with what families pay for such houses, the offers weren’t close to the commercial value of the property .

A limit of no more than three unrelated persons would level the playing field, giving families a fighting chance to buy single-family homes for use as single-family homes.

Parking Violations Abound

Many neighbors are saying that parking violations have been worse this year than at any time in recent memory. Of course, every year finds more students, and more student vehicles, on the streets near the university.

Below are a couple examples of the cars that can be seen parking on front lawns, over sidewalks and blocking driveways this season.

It's not unusual to find parking tickets lying in the snow, thrown there by drivers who think the city will never follow up on them.



On January 18th, a Ticket and Tow detail worked the streets near the university (see below) removing 39 vehicles. This was a welcome activity that we hope to see more of in the future.



Recent Neighborhood House Sales

1050 Ackerman Ave	\$179,900	6/17/05	Paige Ouimette
814-816 Ackerman Ave	\$146,537	7/8/05	Joseph Tupper
1043-1045 Ackerman Ave	\$145,000	9/9/05	Michael Fatta
859-861 Ackerman Ave.	\$142,605	9/23/05	Judith Williams
1000-1002 Ackerman Ave.	\$160,000	12/12/05	Ryan Feldman
104 Berkeley Dr.	\$210,000	8/17/05	P. Edwards & J. Fudesco
515 Broad St	\$137,000	6/20/05	T.Vandenberg & F.Teinkar
524 Buckingham Ave	\$114,900	6/8/05	Tucker & Amber Harris
100 Buckingham Ave	\$112,000	6/24/05	D. & R. Berweger
555 Buckingham Ave	\$122,000	6/27/05	Tyler Cagwin
242 Buckingham Ave	\$120,000	7/8/05	R. & A. Zimmerman
235 Buckingham Ave	\$140,000	8/8/05	David Yaffee & Amy Leal
130 Circle Rd	\$180,000	6/2/05	Amanda Joy Gold
514-516 Clarendon St.	\$139,500	6/13/05	Matthew Chalanick
713-715 Clarendon St.	\$185,000	9/30/05	Hugh Gregg
833 Cumberland Ave	\$66,678	7/12/05	William Etson
1169 Cumberland Ave	\$138,500	7/28/05	Steven Cohan
1137 Cumberland Ave	\$137,500	7/29/05	Drew & Robin Everhart
834 Cumberland Ave	\$30,000	11/1/05	Ralph & Jesse Martin
1155 Cumberland Ave	\$120,000	11/11/05	Sean Garner
1232 Cumberland Ave.	\$95,000	7/28/05	Meredith Oliver
110 Dorset Rd	\$175,000	7/28/05	J. Roberts & A.Berepe
700 Euclid Ave	\$135,000	9/30/05	W. Osuchowski
740 Euclid Ave	\$131,500	11/8/05	Jason & Paula Howell
637 Fellows Ave	\$88,900	8/15/05	Corrine Zoli
250-252 Fellows Ave.	\$121,900	7/19/05	Chelsea Fetzer
109 Kensington Place	\$150,000	7/29/05	R..Hallas & M. Fee
305 Kensington Place	\$131,000	8/2/05	Kishi Anemashawn
351 Kensington Place	\$138,900	12/7/05	Nathan Chefetz
521 Kensington Rd	\$107,500	6/3/05	Pamella Cladwell
217 Kensington Rd.	\$138,000	9/23/05	Phillip Mai
870-872 Lancaster Ave	\$233,500	6/8/05	Ryan & Valerie Mone
841 Lancaster Ave	\$67,000	10/17/05	Denssi & Shirley Wang
1114 Lancaster Ave	\$27,500	11/7/05	CNY Property Holdings
741-743 Lancaster Ave	\$145,000	11/10/05	Wanda Gibbs-Smith
874 Livingston Ave	\$138,000	6/20/05	T. Cateforis & M. Martin
866 Livingston Ave	\$149,500	7/29/05	Ra;ph Rotman
831 Livingston Ave.	\$135,000	9/30/05	W. Osuchowski
715-717 Maryland Ave	\$146,000	8/5/05	Joseph & Cheri Cecile
140 Miles Ave.	\$108,200	8/2/05	R..& D. Reeves
421-423 Roosevelt Ave	\$74,000	11/14/05	Habib Alimir
332 Roosevelt Ave.	\$127,600	12/5/05	C. Rice & C. Martin
922 Westcott St.	\$92,500	10/11/05	SV Rentals LLC
1033-1035 Westcott St.	\$115,000	12/2/05	Keri Sheehan
144 Westminster Ave	\$155,000	6/6/05	Laura & Raymond Hartley
770 Westmoreland Ave	\$92,500	8/11/05	Jay & Larissa Brenner
1077 Westmoreland Ave	\$134,570	9/16/05	Kristin Schweizer
933 Westmoreland Ave	\$147,000	9/27/05	J. Doyle & A. Wyngaard
1106 Westmoreland Ave	\$72,625	12/12/05	K. & J. Amody-Rodway

Join SEUNA

This month's issue of SEUNA Update is being sent to hundreds of SEUNA area neighbors who aren't yet members. Some signed our petitions last fall, others moved recently to the neighborhood.

If you aren't a member yet, join us today so you can attend our annual meeting on Feb. 20th! Or bring your membership payment to the annual meeting and pay at the door!

Membership dues are \$10 per year, \$16 for two years.

SEUNA Members! Don't miss the...

SEUNA 2006

Annual Meeting

Monday, February 20th

7:00 to 9:00 pm

Westcott Community Center
826 Euclid Avenue, Syracuse, NY 13210

Special Guests will include:

Syracuse Common Council members: **Kathleen Callahan, Jeff DeFrancisco, Bethaida González, Patrick Hogan, Ryan McMahan, Stephanie Miner, Van Robinson, William Ryan, Thomas Seals & William Simmons**

Onondaga County legislators: **Althea Chaplin, William Kinne, Sam Laguzza & Lovie Winslow**

2005 SEUNA Board of Directors Ballot

Please vote for any or all nominees; write-ins can be added below (please include contact information). One ballot per household.

Please return this ballot to SEUNA, 935 Lancaster Avenue, Syracuse, NY, 13210, no later than February 16th. Be sure to clip this ballot so you include your address, printed on the reverse side of this page. Or, if you prefer, you can bring your ballot to the annual meeting.

Orville Bakeman	Amber Hansel	Beth Theiss
Pat Janecek	Harry Lewis	Ross Andrews
Giancarlo Moneti	John Oldfield	Dan Smothergill
	Michael Stanton	

I wish to nominate:

name _____

address _____

phone# _____

Name:
Address:
Phone:
Email:

Mail your membership check and information to SEUNA, 935 Lancaster Avenue, Syracuse, NY 13210

Your SEUNA Board

Michael Stanton - President
Harry Lewis - Treasurer
Amber Hansel - Secretary
Ross Andrews
Orville Bakeman
Pat Janecek
Giancarlo Moneti
John Oldfield
Dan Smothergill
Beth Theiss

Join SEUNA

SEUNA is a completely member-funded, not for profit organization. Annual membership is \$10.00 for one year; \$16.00 for two years. **Please mail your check, along with your name, address, phone number and email address to P.O. Box 6658, Syracuse, NY 13217.**

email@seuna.org
WWW.SEUNA.ORG

Two new city ordinances

(Continued from page 3)

dustry in our neighborhood since the University Special District was established fifteen years ago. But, will they change the long-term trends in our neighborhood?

We can divide measures for the near university area into two broad categories. 1) those that help us to better manage and live with the current situation, and 2) those that actually change the current situation.

What is the "current situation?" It has been the same for several decades. The current situation is that the number of students and student cars per residence has grown too high, and student rental properties are now predominant on many neighborhood streets. The

current situation is that families often can't compete with landlords when homes come on the market. The current situation is that our neighborhood continues to slowly but surely lose owner-occupied households — particularly near the university.

Important as they are, the Certificate of Suitability and the Nuisance Party ordinance belong in the "manage the situation" category. They manage the excesses of the current situation without significantly altering its overall trajectory.

This isn't to say these measures are unimportant -- of course we need them. But they don't fundamentally change the situation; they do little to secure the long-term future of our neighborhood.

What measures promise to actually change the situation? That's what our two petitions are all about — see page one.

South East University Neighborhood Association, Inc.
PO Box 6658

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To Our Valued Neighbor:

Winter 2006

- SEUNA petition drive continues
- Annual meeting February 20th
- Two new city ordinances passed
- SU neighborhood survey