

Logan Circles

BY MARK F. JOHNSON

Welcome to a new decade and a new column in this newspaper. Logan Circles is intended to provide news, views and offer some of the lowdown on what's happening around Logan Circle. We might even tell you something you didn't know in the process.

Bread Lines

Speaking of knowing things, as if anyone in these parts couldn't tell, the District is kind of bursting at the seams these days. Logan Circle-ites know this quite well since much of the new population has landed in this 'hood. Ask anyone who stood in the hours-long line at Whole Foods on the Friday before Christmas! In case you forgot, 'Twas the Day before the Blizzard when all through the store not a creature was stirring ... because no one could move on account of the crowds! Loganites were no doubt stocking up on essentials for what turned out to be a long winter's night, and then a day and yet another night of falling snow.

But as I was saying, the city has picked up about 10,000 new residents from last year, according to Census Bureau figures. Figures released at the end of 2009 and shared with me by Loganite Marc Perry, chief of the Population Distribution branch at the bureau, showed the city's population to be 599,657, up from a figure of 590,740 last year. Can there be any doubt that many of these new Washingtonians have made Logan Circle their home? A stroll along P Street or 14th Street any weekday evening or weekend afternoon as Loganites are coming home from work, out shopping, eating or playing, is evidence of the fact that all the new housing that has sprung up over the past few years is being occupied by urban professionals who want to be in "the Circle."

As a native Washingtonian, I can remember when Dupont was referred to simply as "the Circle." Now, people who probably weren't in town at that time, which was as recently as about five years ago, often refer to Logan in

the same way. The old timers must really get confused these days.

Is This the 'In Place'?

Interestingly, the Census Bureau figures also show that the percentage increase in population gain (1.6 percent) was larger than for almost all states. The next decennial census occurs in April 2010, and the first results from the every-10-year headcount will be announced in late December of 2010, Perry says. Neighborhood level data for the District will be available in March of 2011, and we can then have hard figures on just how many newbies have moved to Loganland.

Could it have been the population increase that explained the high number of folks who came out on Dec. 6 for the 31st annual Logan Circle Holiday House Tour? Maybe it was the fact that it was a beautiful, sunny and mild day. Whatever the explanation, the Logan Circle Holiday House Tour committee reported that about 1,200 folks showed up to get an insider's view of the 13 properties on the tour. That amount of turnout rivals their previous high. But it is up by twice the amount of last year's turnout.

Sadly, the popularity of a neighborhood or even the population density doesn't always translate into increased sales for businesses. Just about all the businesses along 14th Street, as well as other parts of the city, like businesses anywhere else in the country, have seen a decrease in holiday sales this year over last year. Of course the aforementioned Blizzard of 2009 may be in part to blame. However, Whole Foods and possibly Logan Hardware may be in the unique position of having sales go up as the snow came down. What other businesses do snowstorms benefit other than food, hardware stores and coffee shops?

Who's in, Who's Out?

Longtime neighbor Go Mama Go (1809 14th St. NW, gomamago.com) has been sorely missing founder Noi Chudnoff since her recent death. Her husband, Jonathan, has been handling

the biz ever since, and some say that her knack for what to buy and how to relate to customers is nowhere to be found these days. Apparently, some customers have also been missing since the business lost her special touch. Could it be true that he's considering putting the whole kit and caboodle to rest later this year if things don't get better?? Word is that the store will close very soon, probably some time this spring. Apparently the landlord has been sniffing around for a higher-paying tenant now that 14th Street is going all Connecticut Avenue on us. How soon before other home-grown businesses go the same way?! Fourteenth Street is one of the last major shopping strips in Northwest with any homespun spirit these days. It would be a big loss for it to go the way of the Big Box. Speaking of homespun for as long as we still can, the new Cork wine shop (1825 14th St. NW, corkdc.com) opened just before Christmas as well as Masa 14 (1825 14th St. NW, masa14.com), a new restaurant with Latin-Asian fusion cuisine. It seems to get pretty busy many nights.

Coming soon across the street is the furniture store Room and Board (roomandboard.com) on the corner of 14th and T in a building that they have been gutting and have redesigned to add an additional level according to representatives of the company. They plan to open their doors sometime in the spring, joining Vastu (1829 14th St. NW, vastudc.com), Muleh (1831 14th St. NW, muleh.com) and Hunted House (1830 ½ 14th St. NW, huntedhousedc.com) as the three other stores that sell furniture on the block. Also, an eat place from the owner of Local 16 is to open about the same time in the building immediately adjacent to the new Room and Board. They have won their liquor license, and they, too, have been gutting the place, which strangely still bears a for lease sign on the building's front. They are looking at a spring or early summer opening.

A rumor running wild, which is probably fitting since it is about a gym ... (allowing time to get the pun) ... is that Results, The Gym may move into View 14 at 14th Street and Florida

Avenue up in Columbia Heights. Universal Gear owner David Franco is also part owner of View 14. Since the gym has to vacate its current location in the old car dealership on U Street near 16th in 2011, Results (resultsthegym.com) has been scouting out a new home, and Franco has been a member of Results. The current Results is slated to become the second area location of Vida Fitness (vidafitness.com), also located at the Metropole at 15th and P, sometime next year.

One new Logan tenant we pretty much do know for certain is the Lesbian, Gay, Bi and Transgendered Community Center (thedcenter.org), which just opened its doors at 14th and S. The center is occupying two buildings that formerly belonged to the Whitman-Walker Clinic but were bought by Bethesda developer JBG, who is currently planning to build the U Street Hotel at 13th and U. JBG bought block of buildings on the Westside of 14th between S and Swann in order to build a high-end apartment/retail complex. They have been stalled in the development process by the economic downturn. However, the clinic offices that used to be located on the site have moved to the Elizabeth Taylor

Center at the corner of 14th and R streets, and the Laundromat, which always seemed to be busy, has closed. This gives the center a temporary home at least, until it can afford to build its own structure or JBG picks up its plans to build its posh residential-retail complex.

Another City Pay Day

Logan Circle businesses and residents be aware that, come Jan. 19, the day after Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, Saturday parking meter feeding goes into effect citywide. That's especially

14th and U News

BY TANYA SNYDER

VIDA Gets in Shape

Fitness fanatics in the U Street area will soon have a new place to do their crunches and pump their biceps. VIDA Fitness got the go-ahead in December from the Board of Zoning Adjustment to build its “flagship” gym and spa in the space Results the Gym currently occupies.

VIDA owner David von Storch plans to

noteworthy for Loganites because of all the businesses located here and also for residents who receive guests who drive to the area. One can imagine that the city sees Saturday meter feeding as one way to help nourish the city’s sickly coffers.

We’re Not in Iowa Anymore

Before I get back to celebrating January, my birth month, I must share an interesting tidbit I recently learned. Perhaps you already knew that the traffic circle that we today call Logan Circle wasn’t named that until 1930? The circle’s original name was Iowa Circle, and Congress renamed it to honor John A. Logan, a former Civil War commander and congressman and senator from Illinois. He lived at 4 Logan Circle from 1885 until his death in 1886. That is him, of course, atop the horse in the center of the circle that now bears his name. I guess the earlier name of the circle explains why the Iowa condominium at 13th and O streets, immediately south of the circle, is called what it is. I did used to wonder why it was called the Iowa.

By the time we meet here again there may have been another snow storm to force everyone in the neighborhood back into Whole Foods. Why not secure extra “emergency” provisions on a shopping day when there is no danger of a blizzard?! Your neighbors who are motivated to shop under the threat of being snowed in will thank you.

While we’re on the subject of stuff falling from the sky, if you know of something that might make interesting fodder for the Logan Circles column, whether it’s unclassified or deep on the low, please send me an e-mail, mark@hillrag.com. ★

renovate the building at 1612 U St. NW and build a glass addition to make room for the biggest VIDA gym yet – nearly twice the size of its Verizon Center location. The 51,500-square-foot, four-story gym will feature, according to von Storch’s plans, “a private rooftop club with a 60-foot pool, resort cabanas, communal fire pit, outdoor waterfall, sundeck and a member lounge with restaurant service.”

The new gym / spa / restaurant will integrate all four kingdoms of von Storch’s empire under one roof: VIDA, Bang Salon, Aura Spa and the Capitol City Brewing Company (though the restaurant he plans to open, replacing Café 1612, will likely be operated by CCBC but called something else.) The Bang Salon will be expanded, and an Aura Spa will be added. The new gym will be the fourth VIDA in the area, bringing von Storch that much closer to his goal of eight gyms.

Results will continue to operate uninterrupted throughout 2010. Owner Doug Jeffries is reportedly looking for a new location in the neighborhood, ideally one available for purchase. Though VIDA publicity keeps trumpeting a March 2011 opening date, insiders expect the space to be vacant for as long as a year as the renovations are made and the glass extension built.

Von Storch has owned the building for decades and has had a conflictive relationship with Results owner Doug Jeffries since the late 1990s, according to the Washington City Paper. Both parties have honored the lease, however, and the change of tenancy will come only when the lease reaches its expiration date.

Visit VIDA fitness at www.vidafitness.com; Results at www.resultsthegym.com.

Building Problems

The 9:30 Club may not be getting 750 new neighbors to annoy. The planned U Street Atlantic Towers retail/residential development has hit some significant roadblocks.

The Washington Business Journal reports that New York-based developer Broadway Management Co. Inc., which has gotten into financial trouble with projects in Mount Vernon Triangle and in Northeast Washington, bought the two-acre site at Ninth and V streets in 2006 in conjunction with a Chicago-based company.

Broadway went into default but couldn’t even get foreclosure to go smoothly. Environmental contaminants in the soil and groundwater seem to be scaring away potential buyers.

New Spaces from Familiar Faces

Busboys and Poets and Marvin may have some new competition for the artsy hipster crowd on 14th and U.



Rendering of plans for the new VIDA Fitness center at 16th and U streets NW. Courtesy of VIDA Fitness.

The people behind Local 16 are moving two blocks east to open a “music and arts” venue.

Chief Financial Officer Salvatore Rosa told reporters at the 14th and You Blog that they’re planning a performance space in the basement and a separate bar. Contentious discussions with Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner Peter Raia, notoriously unfriendly to new liquor licenses in the area, led Rosa, Aman Ayoubi and other co-owners to exercise an abundance of caution, stressing that they don’t plan to become another Black Cat-style nightclub. (Indeed, they plan to avoid the “nightclub” category of liquor license.) Rosa says they plan to “open it up to the community” for local artists and charity events.

The Local 16 team has leases for the basement and the second and third floors, but not the first floor, which Rosa says will likely be a bank. They’re planning to turn the upper floors into a high-end steak-and-burger joint (a combination of Hell-Burgers and Ray’s Steakhouse, says Ayoubi). They hope to open by next July, serving dinner every day and brunch on the weekends. They’re still looking for an executive chef to serve up their fancy \$20 burgers. Expect the yet-unnamed burger joint to open in January.

The Local 16ers held an invitation-only farm-to-table banquet in an area farm over the summer to celebrate the launch of two new restaurants – but neither one was the new burger place on 14th and U. One other new venture is on 14th Street between T and Swann, planned to open early next year, called Table 14 for the moment but expected to change. (The other new restaurant was planned for Petworth.) Table 14 is expected to open in time for next July Fourth in the building that used to house Ware’s Department Store.

The Local 16 crew’s plans for Table 14 include a farm-to-table restaurant serving American-Italian fusion cuisine on the main floor, seating 103; yakitori (Japanese-style grilled chicken) on the second floor; and yet another events space upstairs (for private events and birthdays, says Ayoubi, though he allows that “anything artistic” would be welcome in the “multipurpose” space). They’ll have a two-story atrium, an open kitchen, a green roof and garden, and a small roof deck.

Meanwhile, you may have noticed “Opening Soon” signs on 14th and S for not one, but two, creperies. Crepes on the Corner was supposed to move into the space formerly occupied by the Garden District, with which it shares an owner. But plans for Crepes on the Corner have been shelved as the owner refocuses his full attention on keeping the Garden District alive (let that be an inspiration for local green thumbs to go pay them a visit). That leaves crepe-lovers with only Point Chaud Café & Crepes, on the other side of 14th, to satisfy their banana-and-Nutella cravings. ★