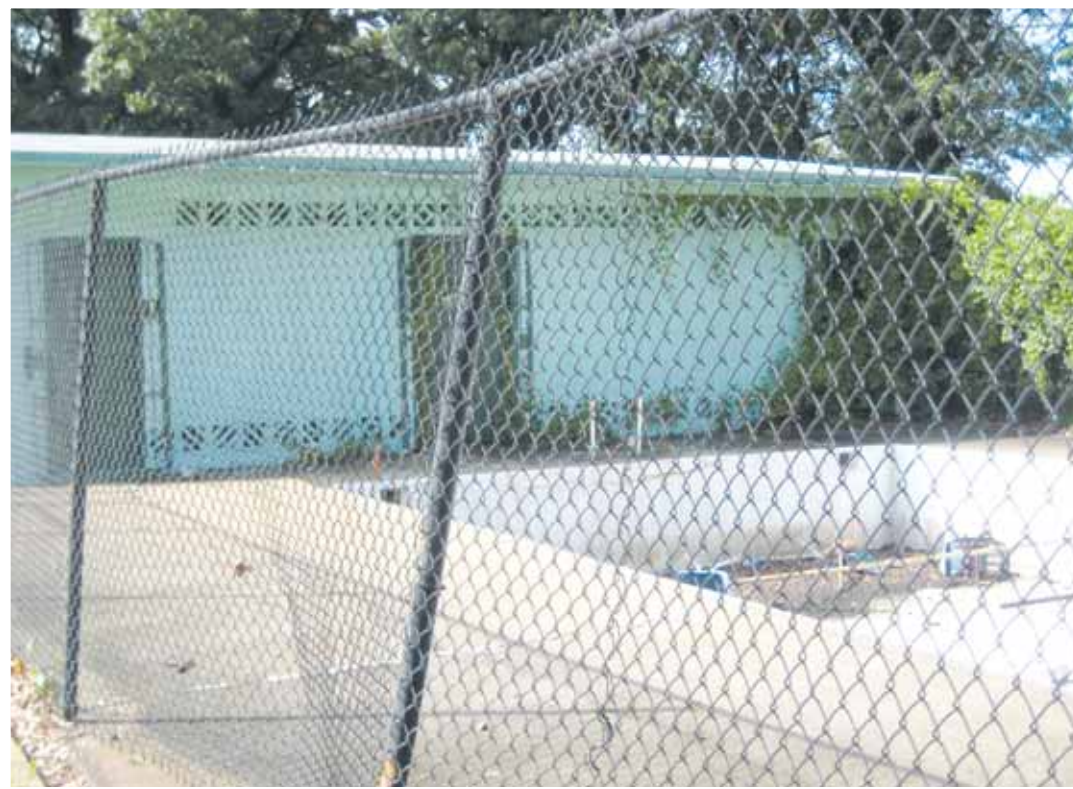


This abandoned pool and pool house, at Fort Mahan Park, will be replaced by a level basketball court as a central part of DCBIA's "Community Improvement Day" in September.  
Photo by Virginia Avniel Spatz



## Groundwork Yields Funding, Expertise Urban Land Institute Advises Local Projects

BY VIRGINIA AVNIEL SPATZ

Land-use experts arrived in Ward 7 at the end of July, touring Deanwood and Parkside and studying proposed developments. Groundwork Anacostia River DC was awarded the "Technical Assistance Panel" (TAP) as a grant from the Urban Land Institute (ULI).

"This was a major achievement for the community," says Dennis Chestnut, executive director of the local Groundwork. Groundwork is a network of independent, not-for-profit, environmental businesses that work with communities to improve their environment, economy and quality of life by getting local people, business, government and other organizations involved in practical projects.

ULI's panel – composed of professionals in sustainable development, landscape architecture, land use law and related fields – spent a day and half working with Groundwork and other stakeholders. Representatives from the Office of Planning and other District agencies and from area nonprofits provided input. Although the ULI's advice will center around Groundwork projects, the ultimate concern was on the quality of life around the built and natural environment.

"We could never have afforded to pay for this expertise," Chestnut adds, noting that the grant "recognizes the importance of what Groundwork is bringing to Ward 7 and what the impact will be."

The TAP is considering early Groundwork efforts, including the following:

- collaboration on a trail connector linking District-owned and National Park Service (NPS) lands
- the related "Community Improvement Day," the annual volunteer effort of the DC Building Industry Association, focused this year on Fort Mahan

- Park (see July *East of the River*);
- developing a model park and gateway to the Anacostia River in the Parkside Development (east of Kenilworth Avenue); and
- a headquarters for the organization.

Still weeks away from its official launch, through the national Groundwork organization, Groundwork Anacostia River DC has already harnessed \$300,000 in federal funding matched by a \$75,000 commitment from the District. Groundwork is working with the Environmental Protection Agency, NPS and District agencies. In addition, Groundwork is working to link different elements of the local community – the Boys and Girls Club on Benning Road, Friendship public charter school on Minnesota Avenue, developer City Interests, civic associations and ANCs, etc. – in long-term neighborhood collaborations.

The TAP was designed to help this new – but already burgeoning – organization focus its energies for the best results. The panel's preliminary findings were presented to Groundwork and interested community members on July 30; a formal report – an invaluable resource for Ward 7 – will be available in the next few weeks.

For more information about Groundwork Anacostia River DC, contact Dennis Chestnut, [groundworkanacostia@gmail.com](mailto:groundworkanacostia@gmail.com) or 202-345-5693.

*To volunteer for the Sep. 12 Community Improvement Day (rain date: Sep. 26), contact Chestnut or Danielle Melus at [dmelus@dcbia.org](mailto:dmelus@dcbia.org) or 202-966-8665. 1000 volunteers are needed in September and more for tree-planting later in the fall. ★*

## No Place for Kids Future of Clubhouse #11 Still Uncertain

BY VIRGINIA AVNIEL SPATZ

A sign advertising "The Positive Place for Kids" remains visible outside 620 Milwaukee Pl., SE, where youth were once welcomed for athletics and other programs. Now, however, a makeshift barrier blocks the way. New signs warn "Caution" and "Danger: Hard Hard Area" without further explanation.

When the Boys and Girls Clubs (BGC) of Greater Washington announced sale of the facility in April, they said the new, then anonymous, buyer had agreed – as a stipulation of the sale – to continue offering youth programming for the area. BGC pulled up stakes in June. Before leaving, they arranged for interested young people to travel to their nearest Branch, FBR, 1.8 miles away (at 1901 Mississippi Ave.)

BGC confirmed in late June that Friendship Public Charter Schools was the purchaser. They have said any community engagement on this facility is now the responsibility of Friendship. Friendship says nothing.

A small group of community leaders, working through Ward 8 Councilmember Marion Barry, has been promised a meeting with Friendship CEO

Donald Hense. This has not yet come to fruition. At press time, Friendship had yet to make any statement on the former Clubhouse #11 or invite community engagement. There is no sign – on the outer wall or in the community – indicating if/when new owners intend to re-open the building to area youth.

“Councilmember Barry tells us Donald Hense is a ‘community person,’” says Tamika Hampton, who has been advocating for youth displaced by this closure. “Maybe he is a ‘community-oriented person,’ but it’s not with Congress Heights.”

Neighborhood activist William Lockridge, Hampton and others organized a rally for recreational alternatives in Congress Heights on July 18. The group believes that residents and community leaders “should come together and be afforded a chance to have a facility in the area.”

“People will lash onto something – either something positive or something negative,” Hampton adds. “And if you keep taking away the positive without providing an alternative, they’ll lash onto that negative.”

The Anacostia Coordinating Council plans to arrange a community-wide meeting for all concerned, says executive director Philip Pannell. He hopes this will be soon after the group’s August hiatus.

Barry did not respond to requests for comment. Friendship has not responded to repeated requests for response.

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*For details on the former Clubhouse #11 and alternative possibilities, contact Lockridge at 202-431-5368 or Hampton at tamika.hampton@gmail.com. ★*

## Urgent ANC Summer Business Commissions 7A, 7D Request Citizen Participation

BY VIRGINIA AVNIEL SPATZ

### 7A Reorganizing, Hiring Staff

ANC 7A has elected a new secretary, Beyshina Woods (7A02) and a new treasurer. After months of continuing difficulties with quarterly reports and withheld funds, the commission is now aiming for a “different method and approach.” The ANC now plans to hire staff and approve a budget for the remainder of the calendar year. The commission does not ordinarily meet in August but has called a meeting to approve expenditures on August 18 at 7 p.m. The location will be the Benning Stoddard Recreation Center on East Capitol Street.

### ANC 7D Rejects Pollin Loan

ANC 7D held a special meeting on July 31 to handle two late-breaking issues. The first hour focused on a DC Housing and Community Development plan to lend \$7.9 million in tax dollars to the Pollin Memorial project. The ANC previously supported the project, an apartment complex slated to replace Park-

side Additions, near Anacostia Ave and Grant St. NE. The loan request, however, was new, and the ANC was given 30 days to file a response.

Commissioners argued that “tax payers shouldn’t bail Pollin out again” (Ross, 7D03), that it’s wrong to “take from the poor to give to the rich; they can pull from their own pockets” (Woods, 7D07), and that any spending in this economy should bring jobs to Ward 7 (Tingling-Clemmons, 7D05). Commissioner Prue (7D04) advocated for “sending a message to these builders that we won’t be treated like this,” and Commission Chair Seaward cautioned that “we can’t just give away all our resources.”

Two community members spoke strongly against using scarce resources for the loan. One noted that the ANC had previously supported the project, adding that Pollin’s promises to the community – including support of holiday food baskets – had been fulfilled so far.

ANC 7D voted unanimously to oppose the loan.

Former Clubhouse #11, July 31. “The Positive Place for Kids” has been shuttered since June and is now under renovation. No sign yet to indicate plans of new owner. Photo by Virginia Avniel Spatz



Chris Donatelli presented his company's plans for Minnesota and Benning ("Phase II") as part of the second agenda item (see "No One Asked Me" in this edition). His team had noted – and found instructive, he said – community reaction to the first agenda item. ★

## From Consolidations to Motorcades

### Changes Are in Store for Many DCPS Students

BY VIRGINIA AVNIEL SPATZ

Changes are in store for a number of DC public schools in Wards 7 and 8, when the new school year begins. Buildings are under renovation, staff members are being replaced, a new "partnership agreement" will be fully launched and other changes are being considered. Volunteers are needed, and a variety of community-school efforts are underway.

#### Consolidations

Birney and Savoy Elementary Schools are being consolidated with the new school year. Renovations at Birney/Savoy Elementary School, 2400 Shannon Place, SE, were still underway on July 31. DCPS spokesperson Jennifer Calloway reported on July 30, however, that a "ribbon-cutting for the building and playground are coming up....The actual move will take place on August 10th. Everything else is on track."

"Former Draper students are being welcomed and are actively enrolling at Ferebee-Hope," says Calloway. "The construction work is proceeding well and the school will have City Year corps members in the fall." (Construction status was not independently verified.)

#### Sousa Middle School

Sousa Middle School lost 2/3rds of last year's teachers. Calloway says this is due to "a variety of reasons including resignation, retirement and termination" Some faculty and community members blame the principal, Dwan Jordan, for the high turnover and requested his removal. He remains.

Sousa will be hosting a "Community Day," Aug. 16, noon – 5 p.m.; a 6th Grade Orientation on Aug.19 and a Back-to-School Night, Sep. 30.

#### H.D. Woodson SHS

On July 30, H.D. Woodson's School Improvement Team discussed items including curriculum additions and a possible relocation of the 9th grade class. The curriculum additions, for the coming year, would prepare students for the new STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Math) curriculum to be launched with the newly renovated building. The possible move would respond to concerns – raised by some parents, students and teachers -- about the housing of 9th graders at Ron Brown Middle School, while 10-12th graders are at the Fletcher Johnson building. Concerns include lack of "high school" feel and role modeling for the younger students, travel logistics for athletics and activities. DCPS presented no decision timeline.

Renovations continue at Birney/Savoy Elementary School, July 31. Photo by Virginia Avniel Spatz



#### Anacostia SHS

Community members continue to express confusion about the soon-to-be-rolled-out partnership between Friendship Public Charter Schools and Anacostia Senior High School as part of the school's "No Child Left Behind" restructuring. Friendship has shared few details with the public about the agreement and did not respond to East of the River's requests for information. The most recent public meeting, hastily announced for late June and thinly attended, focused on the "adaptive reuse" plan (renovation) for 2010-11.

"School leadership is gearing up for the first day of school," Calloway reports. "The school is being organized into four academies with a principal at each academy to provide students with a more individualized academic experience. Leaders of each academy are actively reaching out to the community to recruit students and inform families about plans for next year." Regarding faculty turnover and the partnership, Calloway would say only that the entire staff was "reconstituted" -- i.e., had to reapply for their jobs – after the 2008-09 school year; no details about the coming year were offered.

Anacostia Senior High School is hosting their 3rd Annual Back to School Block Party – complete with free food, carnival games and live entertainment -- Aug. 14, 3 – 7 p.m. at the school, 1601 16th Street, SE. All are welcome, and volunteers are needed. Contact Kim Harrison at 240-606-5435.

#### Ballou SHS

Ballou is in "restructuring" -- along with the nine other comprehensive

DCPS high schools -- under the "No Child Left Behind" mandate. Like several others within DCPS, Ballou was slated for partner, according to the Chancellor's May 2008 restructuring plans. No partnering organization has yet been chosen, however, and another alternative may be in the works.

Meanwhile, a group of local men has organized to provide some unusual student support. Last spring, male seniors were asked to write an essay about how positive males would be of help to them personally. The five best essays were selected. Winners and their dates were then given a ride to the prom on a custom party bus provided by The Men of Color and accompanied by a motorcade consisting of members of Sons of Solomon and Deuces Wild motorcycle clubs, in addition to members of other clubs.

Video of this activity, along with other events of the past school year, have been assembled on DVD, on sale as a fund-raiser for the school. Call or visit the school at 3401 4th St., SE, 202-645-3397. ★

## So Many Happy Endings Food Bank, Grandchildren Share DC's Largest Powerball Win

BY VIRGINIA AVNIEL SPATZ

**L**ower donations and greater needs. Many nonprofits face this unfortunate combination during an economic recession. But some organizations are in an additional bind: "People who once donated are now in need," says Shamia K. Holloway of the Capital Area Food Bank (CAFB).

During 2008, the first year of the current recession, calls to CAFB's Hunger Line -- an emergency food referral system -- increased 91 percent from the previous year, according to Holloway. This year, "partner agencies are reporting up to 200 percent increases in demand for food assistance. They are reporting having longer lines and seeing new faces -- first time visitors, members of the middle class. They are decreasing portions and running out of food faster than ever before."

Amid this dire situation, CAFB, with its 700+ member agencies serving the Washington, DC Metropolitan Area, was especially grateful when a Powerball hit in Ward 8 led to a \$100,000 donation.

### Community Members Win Lottery

This spring, the Giant store on Alabama Avenue sold a Powerball ticket to an 82-year-old, lifelong resident of the District. The ticket hit a \$144 million jackpot, the largest in DC Lottery history. Three weeks later, attorney David Wilmot claimed the prize for the winner, an unnamed community member with ten children and 47 grand- and great-grandchildren. The winner accepted a \$79.6 million lump-sum payment, and winnings were used to establish trusts for education, health care and charitable giving.

In addition, the Giant store was awarded a \$100,000 bonus for selling the winning ticket. In turn, Giant donated the entire sum to CAFB,

Giant and CAFB have been partnering for many years, says Kim Brown, vice president of public and community affairs for Giant. "When we knew that we were going to receive \$100,000, then it was very, very easy to select the Capital Area Food Bank. We've been involved with the Capital Area Food Bank for a long

time, and this is a way for Giant to further its commitment in the community."

"We'll make this money go a long way," says Lynn Brantley, CAFB President and CEO.

"This is such a powerful story," Brantley adds, "not only because of the \$100,000 and what it will leverage and help the food bank accomplish, but the story continues to the unnamed gentleman who won the lottery and went on to set up [educational and charitable trust funds]. It is a great story with so many happy endings."

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*For assistance, contact the Hunger Lifeline, 202-639-9770, or visit [www.dcfoodfinder.com](http://www.dcfoodfinder.com). To donate directly to Capital Area Food Bank, host a food drive or volunteer at a warehouse of Claggett Farm, contact Shamia Holloway: [holloways@foodbank.org](mailto:holloways@foodbank.org), 202-526-5344x230. ★*

## Tenant Choice Awards Announced Marbury Plaza to Honor Activists, Officials

BY VIRGINIA AVNIEL SPATZ

**T**he Marbury Plaza Concerned Tenants-Tenant's Association (MPCTA) is launching the First Annual Tenant Choice Awards. This event is intended to increase awareness of tenant rights and raise money for MPCTA's legal defense fund.

The 672-unit building at 2300 Good Hope Road, SE, has been in what Ward 7 Councilmember Yvette Alexander called "total disrepair" for some time. It is the center of suit and counter-suit from tenants, owners and the District. (See April and May 2009 editions of East of the River online.) Earlier this year, MPCTA received a \$10,000 grant from the Office of Tenant Advocacy which allowed them to retain Steve Raikin, a respected tenants' rights attorney. The grant has already been exhausted, however, in the large and complex case.

MPCTA's Tenant Petition alleges that rents were increased while units were "not in substantial compliance with the DC Housing Regulations" and services and facilities were eliminated and reduced. Tenants have been attempting to have housing code violations abated for many months. In addition, they must now argue for dismissal of eviction lawsuits filed against them, due to nonpayment of rent as a result of a rent strike. Their case is further complicated by receivership of the property.

MPCTA hopes their First Annual Tenant Choice Awards -- scheduled for Sep. 2 -- will raise the \$20,000 needed for further representation in their Tenant Petition Case. The show will acknowledge significant contributions of tenants, community organizations and city officials. Award recipients include Councilmembers Alexander, Barry, Bowser and Kwame Brown; the executive office of the Mayor; the Office of the Tenant Advocate, Bread for the City, the Latino Economic Development Corporation and EmpowerDC. This year's theme is "Building Community Through Empowerment."

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*First Annual Tenant Choice Awards: Sep. 2, 7 p.m. THEARC, 1901 Mississippi Avenue, SE. Tickets are \$20 in advance and \$25 at the door. All proceeds go to the Legal Defense Fund. Contact: 202-459-4660, [marburyta@hotmail.com](mailto:marburyta@hotmail.com). ★*