

ON THE WEST SIDE

THE UNIVERSITY
CITY HISTORICAL
SOCIETY



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Mike Hardy, Editor

TAP II, 2007 EDITION



For a second year, UCHS commissioned the **Community Design Collaborative (CDC)** of the **Philadelphia Chapter of the American Institute of Architects** to provide pro-bono professional design and building advice to UCHS members with questions about exterior architectural problems and repair/restoration proposals. In 2006, four volunteer architects provided on-site analysis and written reports to eight homeowners. For UCHS's **2007 TAP (Technical Assistance Program)**, five city architects and preservationists visited and provided technical assistance to ten additional neighborhood property owners. The volunteers, recruited by the CDC, provided their expertise at the addresses that follow their names and firms: **Pam Zimmerman, Brawer & Hauptman, Architects, at 4807 Springfield Avenue & 914 S. 49th Street; Karena Thurston, Hooper Shiles Architects, at 550 S. 48th Street & 224 St. Mark's Square; Erin Monaghan, Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC, at 4511 & 4524 Locust Street; Kevin Monaghan, KMM Acquisitions, 4313 Baltimore Avenue & 4728 Hazel Avenue; Ahmed Jama, 221 S. 45th Street at 334 & 439 S. 43rd Street.**

Following each site visit and consultation with the owner, a professional assessment and report was developed for each property. Although a formal evaluation of the process will be solicited from both technical assistance providers and their UCHS clients to guide next year's TAP, local UCHS project directors, **Erin Coryell** and **Greg Donofrio**, reported that homeowners and volunteers seemed to find the consultations highly beneficial and informative.

TAP is provided, except for a small registration fee, as a free benefit of membership in UCHS and was funded this year by a local foundation contribution to the society. As part of UCHS's commitment to assisting in historic preservation, it should be considered by members requiring such services in the future along with UCHS's **Contractors/Suppliers List** of craftspeople and resources referred by UCHS members. The list is available to any member requesting it by phone or email.

The photos show CDC technical providers and their UCHS clients on their site visits, **Pam Zimmerman** with **Kara Rennert**; **Kevin Monaghan** with **Eva & Anita Brothers**; **Erin Monaghan** with **Janet Finin** and **Ahmed Jama** with **Joan Rolland**.



DECONSTRUCTING WEST PHILADELPHIA

Roy Harker, UCHS Board

(originally published in the *UC Review*)

The **Satterlee USA General Hospital** historic marker has gone missing again from **Clark Park**. For the second time in as many years, this historic marker, commemorating the site of one of the largest and most complete **Union Army** hospitals during the Civil War from 1862 to 1865, has become the latest victim of theft in the district. This news brings into focus a disturbing trend in our **West Philadelphia** neighborhood; a continuing and sustained theft of historic resources that have served to identify our unique character in the larger historic Philadelphia region.

Stained and leaded glass windows have been stolen from their frames in our residents' houses. Doorknobs, wrought iron fences, gates, fireplace mantels, finials, and all sorts of architectural elements – elements that help make up the fabric of this exceptional neighborhood – are being removed before our eyes. Great front porches, the community builders of architecture, are being torn off of stately rows of houses leaving a gap-toothed grimace behind. A local church has recently lost all of its antique copper gutters and downspouts. And now **SEPTA** has decided to remove antique and durable **Belgian block** from **Chester Avenue** from 42nd to 49th Streets, despite the fact that this roadbed is protected by both a **National Register** designation and local listing on a thematic Historic Paving materials district and placed on the **Philadelphia Register of Historic Sites** and that the **Philadelphia Historical Commission** and the **Philadelphia Streets Department** have not granted permits for the work.

Whether or not this theft is the result of college-aged student pranks, greed, desperate poverty, neglect or governmental indifference, the outcome remains the same: West Philadelphia is being dismantled of its heritage and unique character in small increments and large sweeping decrees.

Why us? Our neighborhood is among the more diverse and architecturally intact communities in

Philadelphia. Perhaps this diversity is perceived as a weakness to be exploited and our architectural resources vast enough to sustain this continued pilfering. There is clearly not enough respect for our community or its resources.

So what is to be done? How can we stop the hemorrhaging of our architectural assets? First, West Philadelphia residents, please be aware of the treasures that surround you which contribute to the life we enjoy and the history we embrace. Second, make your commitment to those resources known. Taking photos of your home's "special treasures" is highly recommended for both insurance and recovery purposes. If your home is under renovation, inform your neighbors that any "removals" of architectural items should be reported immediately to the police. And take measures, like timed lighting and alarms to ward off thefts. Let your neighbors know that their decisions and/or indifference have an effect on all of us. Make SEPTA accountable and responsive to the rights and concerns of the neighborhood.

In short, demand respect for the features that help make this community our home unique, attractive, and livable

Editor's note: Since this article was written, the **Philadelphia Law Department** permitted SEPTA to remove the Belgian block on Chester Avenue, citing concerns for potential "liability". SEPTA removed all of these historic paving materials and paved around the new rails with concrete and macadam.

We also have been informed that a neighbor on the **4300 block of Baltimore Avenue** witnessed the theft of the Satterlee marker and described the thieves as "young, drunk white males wearing shorts who fled east on Baltimore carrying the marker". UCHS will be appealing through student newspapers for the return of the marker.

PHOTO ESSAY

And, if you would like to see how we look to others with a great eye and camera technique, check out <http://phillyskyline.com/photo/joeminardi/streetcarsuburb/> a photo essay by **Joe Minardi** of *West Philadelphia, Streetcar Suburb* with great

shots of the universities, **Powelton, Spruce Hill, Cedar Park** and **Garden Court** along with historically correct commentary, including some interiors which look like Joe was on some of our **UCHS House Tours**. Thanks, Joe

THE CONDOMINIUM IN UNIVERSITY CITY

By **Belynda Stewart, President UCHS**

Condominium as applied here is defined in **Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary** as "individual ownership of a unit in a multi-unit structure (as an apartment building) or on land owned in common (as a town house complex). It comes from the Latin *com + dominium* meaning "common domain" and its use as a word was first noted in 1714.

The concept of 'condominium' ownership is said to date to ancient Rome, but was more likely introduced during the 12th century in Europe. It was not until 1958 that the first statute effecting condominiums was enacted in **Puerto Rico**, but it was not until the enactment of Sec. 234 of the **National Housing Act of 1961** giving the **FHA (Federal Housing Administration)** the authority to insure mortgage loans secured by condominium units in states with laws governing their ownership that condo ownership became more acceptable. By 1969 every state had legislation authorizing condominiums.

Economies and efficiencies of scale make condominium ownership very attractive for the homebuyer. Early development of Philadelphia, and later University City as a street car suburb, used some of those economies of scale with the building of homes designed as 'twins' and 'row-homes'. Smaller lots and common walls allowed for both lower construction costs for the builder, and lower maintenance costs for the owner. The main attraction of condominium ownership is that it provides more reasonably priced housing in a highly desirable area: a direct result of these economies of scale.

University Mews was the forerunner of today's condominium in **University City**. While it is legally structured as a homeowner's association, it has

some of the primary features of a condominium including a common area and individual unit ownership. The original seven prototype Mews were built on the NE corner of 45th and Osage going east and these houses were larger than the final Mews development of 46 townhouses on the SW corner of 45th and Spruce. Designed by **Architect Ron Turner**, and built in 1962, the Mews development was encouraged by the **University of Pennsylvania** in an effort to provide convenient, affordable housing for faculty and staff.

While there was new condo construction and conversion throughout the 1980's into the 1990s in other areas of Philadelphia, with many of these units the result of conversion of large apartment buildings in **Center City**, it was not until 1994 that condominium conversion would appear in **West Philadelphia**.

A developer from Miami, **Elliot J. Sharaby**,

purchased the then 116 unit **Garden Court Apartments**, built in 1922, for \$2,200,000, put another \$2 million plus into the units, selling 60% of them in the first three weeks – primarily to current tenants – making a relatively quick turn around and nearly \$2 million profit. At the time of conversion, the prices paid were approximately \$50 per sq. ft. Today the units in Garden Court sell for \$110 to \$130 a sq. ft. Higher condo fees and building maintenance costs tend to keep the resale values somewhat lower than they would be for a newer building. Again, many of the purchasers were Penn faculty and staff. In addition to **Garden Court Condos**, there were conversions of several smaller apartment buildings during this period, but no new construction until 2004.

Beginning in 2003, local resident and developer, **Tom Lussenhop**, undertook **Spruce Hill Homes** in the **4200 block of Osage Avenue**. This project included the construction of 6 units of new housing and conversion of an adjacent multi-unit corner row-house into 3 more condos. With proximity to **Penn and Childrens Hospital of Pennsylvania**, as well as adjacent off-street parking, the units, ranging in



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size from 1,300 sq. ft. to 1,800 sq. ft. sold quickly. The project attracted a diverse group of homeowners who wanted to live in University City but wanted the option of smaller, new construction housing, as opposed to larger, older homes. Four of the nine current owners have a **Penn/CHOP** connection, but the remaining five simply wanted to live in the area. Prices ranged from \$300,000 to \$500,000 per unit.

2005 saw the University of Pennsylvania undertake the development of their property at **4200 Pine Street**, where they had maintained administrative offices in the original home which had been designed by **Horace Trumbauer** in 1904 for **Charles**

Eisenlohr, the owner of **Conco Cigar Company**. (Trumbauer had also



designed several Philadelphia landmarks including the **Free Library** on the **Parkway** and the **Philadelphia Museum of Art**.) The first planned 4200 Pine project was to be managed by a local developer, the **Rodin Group**, but after nearly a year of issues, Penn changed partners and went with **Campus Apartments** as developer. With a new architect, **Qb3**, the design was reconfigured into 27 units, plus the original historic mansion. These well-finished units with high ceilings, large windows, on-site parking and ancillary storage ranged in price from \$269,000 to \$795,000. The original mansion is still available with a current listing price of \$1,200,000. With the exception of the mansion and one unit, all have been sold.

In 2006, a smaller development involving the reconfiguration of three adjoining houses on the corner of **49th and Cedar** as **Cedarcroft Condos**



was begun. A Philadelphia area builder reconfigured the houses into 12 units ranging in size from 340 sq. ft. to 1,068 sq. ft. per unit with prices ranging from

\$124,900 to \$299,000. Seven of these units have sold, with five still remaining on the market.

The newest project, **Pine West (PW) Condominiums**,



had its recent ground breaking this past October and is being built on a long-vacant lot in the **4700 block of Pine Street** in the midst of the **Garden Court Historic District**. The developer is **i4 Properties, LP**, with partners **Fred Berg** and **Stephen Fox** using **Wulff Architects, Inc.** to design and construct a four story, 20 unit property which has been designed to blend with and complement the 1920's architecture of this historic neighborhood. Condos will range from 565 sq. ft. to 1,225 sq. ft. with prices from \$204,000 to \$376,618. In addition to high-end finishes, anticipated condo fees will be relatively low and the project will have a 10 year tax abatement. The first floor of the building will provide 18 parking spaces. Five of the units have already been pre-sold. Anticipated completion is June 2008.

There are other, unpublicized, possible apartment conversions in University City, and there may be new construction projects in the wings. We will keep you posted. For websites of some of the above, go to www.ucityphila.org/cityguide/hotels/condos For questions, comments, or further information, please feel free to contact me at belynda.stewart1@verizon.net.

400 S. PINE STREET

Belynda Stewart, President, UCHS

In response to area public discussion and diversity of opinion, I recently sent a questionnaire polling our 23 UCHS board members for their opinion on the proposed "**Campus Inn**" project on 40th Street. Of the seventeen members who responded, the results are as follows: The majority of board members would like to see the restoration of the original 19th century Italianate mansion. Eight thought that we should not state a public opinion on the project. Nine thought that we should state our opinion publicly. Of those nine, the majority thought

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our opinion should be made public only if we could all agree on a statement.

A further breakdown is: Three were totally against the project. Three are for the project, and the improvements it will bring to the neighborhood. Three are for the project, so long as there are modifications in the current overall design.

RESEARCH

The **Partnership CDC** is interested in speaking to adult (18 years or older) international residents and/or employees who have come to **University City** within the past five years, be they residents, business owners, employees, students, clergy, law enforcement personnel, of foreign decent who either live or work in University City. The CDC is looking to speak with respondents for about 10 minutes to gather some information. The first 30 respondents will receive a voucher for a complimentary weekend getaway for two at a hotel in a location of his or her choosing. The Partnership CDC will use the findings to figure out which services it should provide and would make the results available to the public. If you or someone you know is willing to participate in this study, contact Kathleen Jeanty, 215.988.2044 x 801 or kathleen@innerleaf.com

NEWS

University City District is launching a new e-mail newsletter in January that will be distributed bi-monthly and feature information on community cleanups, street closures, construction updates, business openings, and other community information. To sign up, send your first name, last name and e-mail address to michael@ucityphila.org. Please indicate 'community newsletter sign up' in the subject line.

SAVE THESE DATES

Sunday, January 27, 2008 - Charles Dickens Birthday Party with dramatic readings, music, refreshments and **Dickens and Little Nell** "crownings" sponsored by the **Friends of Clark Park**, 2 pm., **USIP's Rosenberger Hall, 600 S. 43rd Street**, free

Sunday, February 10, 2008 – Dickensian Luncheon with period foods to celebrate Dickens' birth sponsored by the **Dickens Fellowship of Philadelphia**, approximately \$25/person at **Mari-gold Kitchen, 45th and Larchwood Avenue**, 1 pm. For more info or to reserve, call Bob Behr, (215) 387-4802 or bobbahr@hotmail.com

Sunday, February 10, 2008 – UCHS Valentine's Awards Tea with refreshments, preservation "thank yous" and **UCHS Preservation Awards** at 5 p.m., at **The Castle, 48th and Springfield Avenue**, 4 - 6 pm, free for UCHS members and guests, invitations will be mailed as reminders.

COMMENDATIONS AND REFERRALS

It's not too late to nominate those responsible for undertaking historically sensitive exterior repairs and restorations to properties in **University City** to receive commendations from UCHS and thanks for their **Gifts to the Streets** or for those who should be commended for their **Green Gifts to the Streets**. All of those commended will be invited to and recognized at our upcoming **UCHS Valentine's Award Tea** along with with images of their contributions. Just give us their addresses at info@uch.net or (215) 387-3019.

And if you have additional contractors or building material suppliers who should be added to our **UCHS Contactors/Suppliers List** which is available to UCHS members, contact us and ask for a special questionnaire to be sent to you to record your recommendations. Just give us a call or email us to request the questionnaire or the list.

AND SPECIAL THANKS

To those who recently renewed their annual dues to UCHS, particularly those who gave generous additional contributions as **Sustainers of UCHS: Mary E. Blackson; Ethel Cebra; Dan DeRetis, Apartments @ Penn, Inc.; E. David Horwitz; Chris & Grace O'Donnell, O'Donnell Real Estate** or who made additional contributions as **Friends of UCHS: Gwen Bailey, Executive Director, Youth Service, Inc; Sylvia & Michael Brown; Warren Cederholm, Jr. & Don Caskey; Richard Dretsch, Robert & Elizabeth Adams-Eilers; Freda R. Egnal; Sylvia L. Egnal; Luisa Boverini & Jeff Heit, John Schnepf & Richard Kirk, Nadine Landis; Maureen Tate & Jerry McHugh; Maureen Miller; Ronald & Mary Elizabeth Pfeil; Paul Steege & Associates; Carol Thomson, Joan Weiner; Joan Wells and Woodland Presbyterian Church**

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