

HNA REPORTER

HELDERBERG NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

ACADEMY STATION, P.O. BOX 8841, ALBANY, NY 12208

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BRING A CHAIR!

Join us for
HNA'S ANNUAL PICNIC!
Wednesday, September 21, 2005 5:30 pm
(Rain Date: Wednesday, September 28)
Field next to the Firehouse on New Scotland Ave.
Food, Gifts, Raffles, Neighbors, Fire Trucks and more.....
All Free!

BRING A DISH
 TO SHARE!

DEAR NEIGHBORS:

After a long, muggy summer, it's time for our annual kick-off to Autumn, the HNA Picnic. The event will take place at the field next to the firehouse on New Scotland Avenue on September 21, 2005 (rain date September 28). It promises to be an evening of food, fun, and camaraderie for all. Our Association celebrated its 10th Anniversary last year and set a new record attendance with more than 300 people coming out to get better acquainted with their neighbors. Our goal is to set a new attendance record each year but we can only do it with your help.

Volunteers are needed to assist with the picnic, from set-up to clean-up. Chairs will not be provided, so please bring your own. Anyone wishing to bring a dish to share is invited to do so. HNA will provide the hotdogs, hamburgers and soda.

If you would like to help, contact Neighbor-to-Neighbor Committee members Jennifer Viggiani (489-3824) or Dennis Gaffney (482-9813).

We all have much to celebrate and much to look forward to in the years to come. I'll see you on the 21st .

Craig Waltz, Chair

NEIGHBORHOOD HARVEST FESTIVAL

The First Congregational Church of Albany, 405 Quail St., is holding their 2005 Harvest Festival on October 8 from 10 am to 5:30 pm. Planned events include a flea market, bake, book and craft sales; free children's activities featuring Bounces by Sunshine, Wizzie the Magic Clown, pony rides, a petting zoo and face painting; and a roast beef dinner. Tickets for the dinner are available from the church office any weekday. Reservations and ticket price inquiries can also be made by calling 482-4580 between 9:30 am and 1:30 pm.

DON'T FORGET TO VOTE!

Tuesday, November 8: Election Day.

A portion of the printing of this newsletter has been provided as a public service by



BEWARE OF SCAMS

We thought we'd let you know that one of your neighbors was the recent target of a scam. She received a phone call from someone claiming to be from her bank. She was asked to withdraw a large sum of money from her account and meet the caller in a parking lot nearby. Of course, this sharp-witted senior caught on, and the scam was foiled.

We've also heard of a scam involving "demand drafts" which are a legitimate way of paying bills, but are indicated as not requiring a signature. All a scammer has to do is obtain your account number and add it to the draft.

So, be very wary, and never give out personal information of any kind over the phone without verification. If someone calls you, you should call your bank to find out what's going on.

If you wish to give to hurricane relief efforts, use caution. Only give to established relief groups such as the Salvation Army or American Red Cross. Don't give cash. Use a credit card or check. And, be wary of strangers asking for donations as well as unsolicited e-mails.

Editor

ALBANY POLICE DEPARTMENT EXAM

The exam for police officers in the City of Albany will be offered on Saturday, December 3, 2005. Applications must be received no later than Thursday, October 27. Applications and job announcements may be obtained at the office of Albany Municipal Civil Service Commission in City Hall, Room 301.

The Helderberg Neighborhood Association meets on the third Wednesday of January, March, May, July, September and November. Meetings are held from 7:00 to 9:00 pm at the Junior College of Albany, Campus Center. The last 2005 meeting will be held 11/16/05.

HNA Reporter is published every other month. Deadlines for articles or ads are 1/2; 3/1; 5/1; 7/1; 9/1; and 11/1. Ads and articles may be mailed to HNA, Academy Station, P.O. Box 8841, Albany, NY 12208. HNA Editors reserve the right to accept, reject or edit articles for content and space considerations.




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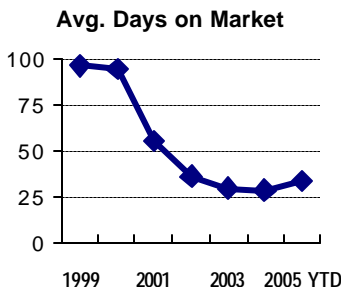
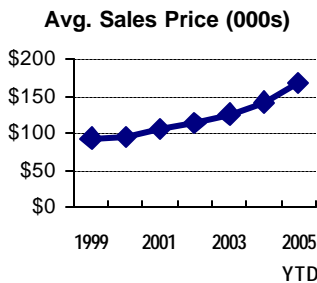
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Healthy Neighborhood Real Estate Market

If you read the papers, you've probably seen the skyrocketing real estate prices. According to the National Association of Realtors, prices for single-family homes are going up as much as 30 or 40 percent per year in metropolitan areas in Florida, Arizona, and Nevada. As prices increase, so do expressions of concern about what could happen if the boom turns out to be a "bubble" that bursts, erasing billions in home equity in the process.

Sales of Single-Family Homes, Helderberg Neighborhood 1999-2005 (approx.)



But what is the local real estate market like? Is our neighborhood in the midst of a real estate boom? David Phaff, the "Principal Agent for Your Community Team at RealtyUSA" and a sponsor of the HNA newsletter, provided us with Capital Region Multiple Listing Service data on single-family home sales from 1999 to the present from a geographic area with almost the same boundaries as the Helderberg neighborhood. The figures do not include houses sold by owners without the help of a real estate agent.

The data show that while the number of annual sales has remained fairly constant at 55 to 70 per year, prices have been rising steadily and houses are selling much more quickly than they did a few years ago.


In 1999, the average sales price was just under \$93,000. Five years later, the average was \$142,000, an increase of 53% over five years. So far this year, the average is \$167,000, which is almost 18% higher than the average for 2004. Currently, the average selling price is very close to the average asking price, indicating that the market is strong enough to generate considerable buyer interest and even multiple bids, but is unlikely to produce heated bidding wars. Mr. Phaff notes that now there are more price reductions than previously. In some cases, sellers may have unrealistic expectations about the value of their house, or agents may be not be familiar with the local market.

Since 1999, the average time a house spends on the market has dropped from three months to just one while the percentage of houses sold in a week or less has grown from under 2% in 1999 to 45% in 2004. So far this year, however, only about a quarter of houses are selling in seven days or less. According to Mr. Phaff, some homeowners are testing the waters, willing to sell only if they get a very good price. For his own real estate team, Mr. Phaff has adopted a policy of not considering offers immediately when a house goes on the market. This ensures that the seller gets good exposure for the property and gives prospective buyers a chance to weigh their offers carefully.

In short, the neighborhood real estate market seems to have taken off, but in a modest way. When Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan warned about excess "froth" in real estate markets in some parts of the country, he was definitely not talking about our neighborhood.

Susan Van Deventer with David Pfaff

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HNA Reporter welcomes the following new businesses:

New Avenue A Offers Multi-Ethnic and Traditional Fare

At last a new restaurant, Avenue A, has opened in the long-vacant space behind Sheehy Opticians near the corner of Ontario and New Scotland. Co-owners Nancy Kupiec and Ron Tiu (who also serves as manager) have created a bright welcoming interior and an unpretentious menu that promise to make Avenue A a popular neighborhood hangout.

Open at 3 pm for late lunches or dinner, the menu features home-made soups, sandwiches, and appetizers. The choices include traditional American favorites such as a BLT or roast beef as well as creations incorporating a wide range of ethnic flavors. Among the latter are a Filipino mechado sandwich, Jamaican jerk chicken, and "five spice pork chop." Vegetarians will find at least one meat-free option among appetizers, soups, and sandwich offerings.

The night menu is evolving; it will include a mix of standard appetizers along with a small selection of entrees that will vary according to seasonal availability of ingredients and the inspiration of the chefs. Manager Ron encourages his chefs to try new dishes and expects to offer new specials regularly. The restaurant has a full bar with a modest yet varied selection of beers and wines. Ron notes that Avenue A plans to develop a wine program featuring affordably priced high quality wines from smaller vintners throughout the world. Prices for sandwiches range from \$5 to \$12.

For now, during the restaurant's "soft opening," hours are daily from 3 pm to 10 pm—sometimes later on Thursday through Saturday. On Saturday and Sunday brunch is served from 11 to 3.

Avenue A: A Contemporary Tavern, 289 New Scotland Ave (entrance in the back, off Avenue A). Telephone: 320-8684.

Susan Van Deventer

TONE & FIT

TONE & FIT is the new name of the 30-minute fitness center for women at 287 New Scotland Avenue. The new owners, Frank and Kathy Stramiello, also offer Yoga classes on Tuesdays from 67 pm and Pilates classes on Wednesdays from 6-7 pm. The class schedule will be expanded in the fall.

PACE (Programmed Accommodating Circuit Exercise) is the original 30-minute hydraulic circuit training exercise program, which combines both a muscle toning strength workout with a fun cardiovascular workout. A complete workout takes only 30 minutes, but burns more calories than an hour on a treadmill. The equipment is adjustable and will effectively strengthen muscle, replace fat with lean muscle tissue, and take off inches and pounds safely and quickly if applied properly.

TONE & FIT has a special offer from now until November 15. Make a donation to the National Breast Cancer Foundation and receive FREE: one Total Body Conditioning and one Yoga or Pilates Class (\$30.00 Value).

TONE & FIT is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. and Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. Call them at 458-1133 or visit them and see how much fun it can be to exercise with your neighbors and friends.

Cyra Nealon



Cheryl A. Moore
Photographer

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HNA Reporter Deliverers Needed:
Newsletter deliverers and substitutes are needed for Cardinal, Van Schoick and South Main. Call Susan at 459-7760 if you can help.



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RANDY K. HAMMER, PASTOR
E-MAIL: 1stcong@nycap.rr.com

Helderberg Neighborhood approaches its Centennial year

Many houses in the Helderberg Neighborhood are close to 100 years old. The Helderberg neighborhood was laid out by 1908 with its first four streets (Lawnridge, Grove, Glendale and Forest) along the wood plank toll road that was New Scotland Avenue. Our rich architectural heritage includes a wonderful collection of early 20th century bungalows and true Colonial Revival houses. These houses possess high quality craftsmanship and architectural design features that create a strong neighborhood cohesiveness.

Sadly, this architectural cohesiveness is threatened by inappropriate alterations and removal of the original details that give the homes their unique character. To encourage the preservation of neighborhoods such as ours, which are not old enough or of sufficient historic significance to be designated as formal historic districts, the city has created a "Traditional Neighborhood Overlay District." The Overlay District, defined under Chapter 375, article VII of the City of Albany Zoning Code, includes portions of the Pine Hills, Buckingham, Beverwyck, Melrose, New Albany, Woodlawn, and Helderberg neighborhoods. The intention behind the Overlay District designation is to protect the character and quality of these uptown

neighborhoods by encouraging property owners to maintain the design and architectural materials of individual properties.

The Historic Albany Foundation has been working with preservation professionals and city codes officials to enforce the Overlay District. The Foundation's strategy is to educate property owners and provide them with technical assistance. Nick DiLello, head of Albany's Department of Buildings and Codes, will be working with the Historic Albany Foundation and local neighborhood associations to help residents appreciate and learn to protect features that give traditional neighborhoods their character. The Foundation offers property owners help finding appropriate methods or contractors for rehabilitation, as well as hands-on workshops and advice to homeowners on how to tackle projects themselves.

Besides its aesthetic benefits, protecting our architectural heritage can have economic benefits. National statistics suggest that property values and sales potential are enhanced in well preserved historic neighborhoods. Historic preservation can also spur revitalization efforts by serving as a magnet to attract new businesses, residents, and tourism dollars while enhancing the quality of life for residents.

For more information on the Historic Albany Foundation, go to www.historic-albany.org or call 465-0876.

Kim Alvarez

Ed. note: The author is an architectural preservation consultant.



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HNA thanks David Phaff of RealtyUSA for his assistance in financing the cost of the HNA Reporter.

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Landmark Consulting is a husband and wife team which specializes in restoration & architectural services for historic buildings. (This means homes built in the first half of the 20th century, too!) Jack Alvarez is a NYS registered architect, and Kimberly Konrad Alvarez is a historic preservation planner. Together they help owners of old homes research their properties, develop a restoration plan for their home, design renovations or additions, determine appropriate paint schemes, & assist in finding qualified contractors that have the skills for working on old homes.

Landmark Consulting is happy to offer 25% off typical consulting fees for Helderberg Neighborhood residents.

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Join or renew your membership in HNA now and get 2006 free!

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES:
Household: \$ 5.00
Business: \$10.00
Associate: \$10.00

Each household membership has one vote. Business members will receive one free ad in the HNA Reporter, and will have voting rights. Associate Members (not living within our boundaries) will have the HNA Reporter mailed to them.

Please enroll me as a member of the Helderberg Neighborhood Association. Enclosed is a check, made out to HNA, in the amount of \$_____ for a _____ membership. (Checks may be mailed to: HNA, Academy Station, P.O. Box 8841, Albany, NY 12208 OR brought to the next HNA meeting.) Date mailed: _____

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