

## **CSTNA Meeting, February 14, 2017**

### **Welcome/Announcements by CSTNA President Nathan Durant**

- Spring cleaning is coming up – we need to think about what we want to do. Please email ideas to Nate at [wndurant@gmail.com](mailto:wndurant@gmail.com) or post them on the CSTNA FB page.

- Parks renovation – a small group of CSTNA officers and others have been working with Cornerstone West and West Side Grows to secure starting funds to redesign and renovate both parks (playgrounds, drainage issues, etc.). Within the next week we're going to send an MOU to the city administration, letting them know what our plans are, and at the beginning of March we'll be sending out an RFP to design/engineering firms. We'll be seeking additional funding in May specifically for the drainage issues. If you're interested in being a part of the planning in any way, let Nate know.

### **Yolanda Mohammed, United Healthcare**

New program started recently for people who have both Medicare and Medicaid that offers additional benefits. UnitedHealthCare Dual Complete offers credits for dental, vision, and hearing coverage. You are already deemed eligible for this program if you've been deemed eligible by the state for both Medicare and Medicaid. There's no premium and no copay – it's a no cost program. Currently only available in New Castle County.

UnitedHealthCare is trying to get the word out about the program – if you know of any upcoming community events where they could have a table or give a brief presentation, let them know. Contact info: (877) 842-3210 [www.uhc.com/contact-us/delaware](http://www.uhc.com/contact-us/delaware)

### **Christian Willauer, new Executive Director of the Wilmington Neighborhood Conservancy Land Bank**

The purpose of a land bank is to get vacant properties back into the community. A lot of owners owe back taxes and don't want to pay the taxes in order to sell, so the property sits deteriorating. If someone owes a lot of money on a property and isn't taking care of it, the city forecloses, and owners can choose to pay up or give up the property. This gets properties back on the private market for first-time home owners, renovations, sometimes demolition, etc. The Land Bank's job is to prioritize properties – which properties are the biggest problem and which might have the most demand on the market.

The Land Bank has a governing board made up of city reps, some banks, and technical board members specializing in urban gardening, etc. Minutes are posted online. It's a public entity – the public can be watchdogs and hold it accountable. Christian would like to develop a lot of community partnerships.

Wilmington currently has an aggressive system of fining owners of vacant properties, but if they're paying taxes, the property is code compliant, and they're paying those fines, there's not much we can do about it and that's ok – they're keeping up their responsibilities as property owners. The Land Bank's focus is on properties that are deteriorating and causing problems. They currently have a list of about 1,500 vacant properties in Wilmington for which they're working to motivate owners to either do something with the property, pay up, or give it up.

Owners are supposed to register a property when it becomes vacant – the public can contact the Department of Licenses and Inspections to find out if properties are registered as an abandoned property.

Some properties will be redeveloped by affordable housing organizations. People are also talking about revisiting the homestead act that in the 1970s made houses available for \$1. The Land Bank is a work in progress – they're trying to put together a menu of different ways to bring vacant properties back. Creative ideas that empower citizens are welcome.

Christian encouraged us to show up at neighborhood planning meetings, put forth your vision for the neighborhood – not just things you don't like, but what you'd like to see for the neighborhood.

**Other Business**

- Stop by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Street Bazaar on Thursdays, 5-8 p.m. for delicious food and a variety of artisans/artists. Held at The 3<sup>rd</sup> Place and the Bike Lane Cafe on the corner of 7<sup>th</sup> and Harrison.
- West End Neighborhood House is holding a fundraiser on March 16 at 8<sup>th</sup> and Union Kitchen for the first night of March Madness
- The 5<sup>th</sup> District Neighborhood Planning Council is getting ready to launch a website and will be holding elections. Sign up for the FB group (“5<sup>th</sup> District Neighborhood Planning Council”) for info and updates. The council is there to be a voice from the community to the city government. Among other goals, they want to create a list of all the vacant homes in the district. Monthly meetings are the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of every month except January, 7 p.m. at Hilltop Lutheran on 6<sup>th</sup> Street.