



MARKTOWN UPDATE

A publication of the Marktown Preservation Society

July 2003

Oak Avenue Moves Towards Completion

As we reported last month, Oak Avenue is progressing very nicely. Hundreds of yards of concrete have been poured and we're not quite finished. The photo shows concrete finishers from Reith-Riley Corporation finishing a section of Oak Avenue.

The old silver maple trees were removed first. Then all of the water shut offs were inventoried and repaired as necessary. Next came the curbs, secondary curbs, 6" structural concrete sidewalks and the secondary 4" area that protects the fences and historic lighting. The last item poured was the actual street surface.



By the time that this issue of Marktown Update is distributed, the street will have been opened for several weeks. Wow, what a great job!

Just how far are we from seeing this street finally completed? That's simple. It will be two to three months from now. It will take 8-12 weeks for the lighting to be shipped in. Once it is received it will have to be installed. Seven lights will be placed on Oak Avenue, four on the north side and three on the south side. Once the lighting is in, the old NIPSCO poles will be removed and the sidewalks will be completed.

ISG Responds to Residents Complaints

At the June meeting of the Committee for a Better, Cleaner and Safer Marktown Historic District, it was reported that ISG Indiana Harbor Works had been contacted in reference to a problem here in Marktown. Ruth Turpin of Prospect Street had complained about the dust from the trucks cutting across the ISG property adjacent to Dickey Road. When the wind is from the west or the north west, all of the dust blew into Marktown and made quite a mess of things.

At the meeting Paul Myers reported that ISG said that they would look into the problem and that they thought that they could resolve it in just a few weeks.

The chairman of the committee noted that he didn't

want to hear about what they were going to do. He wanted to see something in writing from them.

Well, we don't need anything in writing from ISG in reference to this, all you have to do is take a look and you can see that they have totally resolved the problem.



Ruth Turpin of Prospect Street is shown here seated upon one of the newly installed concrete barriers.

Apparently, trucks were cutting across the open field and kicking up the gravel dust in the process. ISG, being good neighbors, resolved the problem by closing off the area with large concrete barriers.

Our special thanks goes out to ISG for taking care of this problem. Oh, and as for that letter. We will be writing the letter to ISG thanking them for their assistance. You see, it doesn't take a great deal of work to resolve problems. All you have to do is try.

Making a Difference by Rafael Bejar

Back in January of this year, Paul Myers interviewed me for an article that appeared in the February issue of Marktown Update. Let me begin this article by repeating some of what I said back then.

Right after I was married, we needed a place to raise our children. When we moved in here I was just looking for affordable housing and wasn't much interested in anything beyond that. I bought the house from Mrs. Alma Smith who had lived in Marktown her entire married life, some sixty plus years. While the house was in fairly good condition, it was in need of a good deal of plaster work to bring it up to a more livable condition.

My first year or two here I parked a car in the yard and really didn't care much about what other people thought about it. Over the next few years I met some of the neighbors and older residents of the community.

After a while I realized I didn't just buy affordable housing, I bought a remarkable piece of history. A year or two ago I purchased 408 Spring Street and totally renovated the interior of the home. Later this year I will repair the stucco that is missing and will repaint and restore the exterior to the same standards that were used on the interior.

That's about enough of the past, but now I want to talk about the future. When we first moved in, nearly all of Spring Street was occupied. There was a pair of houses down the street that virtually everyone complained about. Over the past eight years, Spring street went from nearly full occupancy to now having 13 of the 20 homes vacant. What caused the problem. Just three homes. You

always knew when spring was in the air because of the annual migration of cock roaches from these properties. One house actually had a washing machine in the back yard that dumped the wash water onto the ground and into the neighbors yard. If you said anything to the tenants of the property they would chase you off the block, and absolutely no one, no one could do a thing about it.

Well, I've done something about it. Realizing that all three units were vacant, I contacted the property owner and made arrangements to purchase two of the three properties. My first goal is to at least clean up the health department problems with one unit, and the gross building code violations with the other building. Now, you wouldn't think, that given the fact that absolutely no one wants to live on Spring Street, that anyone would ever complain about someone actually wanting to make a positive difference in this community. But they have.

Yes, one of our local residents is actually complaining over the fact that I am cleaning up the properties and that Spring Street is beginning to look better each and every day. If anyone wants to know just how bad these properties were, just give me a call. I would be more than glad to share the photos or the building and health department reports with you. And if you ask me really soon, maybe I will give you an interior tour of the house they want the tenant to move back into.

This is a most remarkable community. All we have to do is to work together in order to make a positive difference in this neighborhood. It doesn't take a lot of money, just some hard and honest work.



417 Spring Street earlier this year. What a mess!



The same house just one week after Rafael started work.

Life begins when you begin to serve. Serve your neighborhood. Serve Marktown. Volunteer to help make Marktown a Better, Cleaner and Safer Place to Live and Raise a Family.

Marktown Community Center to be used as Cooling Center for Local Residents

Sometimes it's just too hot to do anything, and at times it even gets far too hot outside or in your home for it to be healthy. The East Chicago Health Department, in conjunction with the Parks and Recreation Department have once again moved forward to help to resolve this problem. Residents of all ages, but most especially our senior citizens are encouraged to take advantage of the air conditioned community center in Marktown on those days that it is just far too hot to stay at home. During the summer the Marktown Community Center is opened Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM through 5:00 PM. For further information, please call

the Marktown Community Center at 391-8370, or contact the Parks and Recreation Office at 391-8474.

The LCEOC also provides free house fans for those who meet their income eligibility requirements. Those that received energy assistance in the past automatically qualify. For further information on this program, please contact the LCEOC at 937-3500. Free air conditioners may also be available for those that have proper documentation from their physician. The documentation should include the need of a family member who's medical condition is affected by the heat.

Marktown Historic District Included in Nationally Acclaimed Steel Shores Exhibit

In the June issue of Marktown Update we mentioned that the Lake County Convention and Visitor's Bureau had an outstanding new exhibit titled Steel Shores. The exhibit was such a success that it has been extended until July 13, 2003.

The exhibit chronicles the history of the three big steel companies here in Lake County; Inland Steel, US Steel and what is now ISG Steel. About a week before the exhibit was scheduled to open we were asked to produce a display on the history of Marktown. Several dozen photographs including some vintage and contemporary photos graced the display.



Ms Maria, her assistants and her students enjoy a morning touring the Steel Shores exhibit.

Judy Hicks, our Team Leader for the Marktown Community Center had originally asked for permission to take the children to see the exhibit. About two weeks later, Ms Maria began a reading and writing project for the children of our community. One of the topics was the history of our neighborhood. Wow! What a great idea.

Ms Maria, her two assistants and several of her students from the STARS program toured the exhibit on Monday, June 30th. Everyone enjoyed the exhibit and especially the photographs and text that referenced Marktown. Way to go kids! Enjoy your STARS camp!



A small portion of the Marktown Collection at the Steel Shores Exhibit at the LC Welcome Center

Parks and Recreation Department Offers Great New Programs Throughout City!

If you didn't receive your copy of the Parks & Recreation Department Summer 2003 Program Guide (in English and Spanish), then you need to get down to the Old Marktown Community Center really soon and pick up a copy.

One of the most innovative programs is the STARS Summer Day Camp, and yes, it is happening in Marktown. STARS stands for Students Targeted to Reaching Success and is being administered in Marktown by Ms Maria and Judy Hicks, the Group Leader for the Marktown Center. Our youth deserve a place that is safe and fun to play, to learn, to experience life. The STARS program is just that. Every-day will be filled with activities from games and sports to activities designed especially to meet certain age and individual characteristics. The goal is to help our youth build strong character by experiencing a variety of cultures, learning new sports, learning more about themselves, and acquiring important skills to handle various life issues.

Bicycle Tour Comes to Marktown

Saturday, June 14th brought over 60 cyclists to tiny little Marktown, and from the sounds of things, this won't be their last tour of our neighborhood. The tour began in the Pullman Historic District in Chicago, traveled across the lake front to Whiting Park and then onto Marktown. After the driving (riding) tour around the perimeter, they toured a home on Prospect Street and then took a guided walking tour of the neighborhood.

The participants were all thrilled. They not only enjoyed the tour but they went away with a better understanding of our community. The one comment that was made time and time again by those who participated on the tour was "Wow, what potential. If only everyone would work together and do the right thing."

About two weeks after the initial tour, several other cyclists who could not make the June 14th date made it a point of touring Marktown. Guess what? They were thrilled with what they saw and they will be back!

What else is happening at the Old Marktown Community Center? Well, if you didn't hear, Judy Hicks is now the Team Leader at the Center. That's the good news. The bad news is that she is subject to be transferred to other centers from time to time. While we missed her when she was gone for two weeks this past month, we were all glad to see her when she returned.

Breakfast and lunch are once again being offered at the center. Breakfast is served daily beginning at 8:00 AM and lunch is available from Noon to 1 PM.

Have you signed your children up for their Swim Passes yet? Application forms are available at the Community Center and once the pass is issued they can be used at both water parks and the Goodman Pool. Judy Hicks has asked that the Park Department make a van available at least once a week to take Marktown children (*with their parent's permission*) to one of the pools. Check with Judy for details.



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WHO SAID IT WAS ONLY AN EMPTY CAMPAIGN PROMISE? by Adrian Santos

Let me begin by saying thank you, thank you, thank you for permitting me to continue to serve Marktown and all of the 5th District as your elected representative in our municipal government. It has been a great seven years and I am looking forward to the next four years.

One of the things that always appears to happen during an election is that the opposition always says "It's only a campaign promise. You don't think they will do it after they are elected, do you?" Well, let me make this clear, **WE DON'T MAKE EMPTY CAMPAIGN PROMISES!**

Let's take your community concerns one by one.

1. The Old Marktown Community Center had all of the exterior lights replaced. We also put in sod around the building and repaired the water hose faucet.

2. Other Park Improvements include the resurfacing of the basketball and tennis courts. That's done and the tennis nets should be installed later this month. The drain on the basketball courts will be cleaned out so the courts can still be flooded in the winter for skating. New basketball nets have been installed and the lighting on the tennis and basketball courts have been replaced.

3. Neighborhood Signage has been replaced in all of Marktown and most of East Chicago. The new bright red street signs look great!

4. Street Repairs are moving forward. Oak Avenue is relatively completed and will be finished when the historic lighting arrives in the next 8-12 weeks. Spruce Avenue will be done in 2004 and will hopefully comply with the American Disabilities Act. Until then, any potholes on Spruce will be taken care of (*like they were last week.*) How do I know they were filled. Because I put in the work order and watched them fill the potholes.

5. The Softball Fields are looking really great. What a pleasure it was to have the East Chicago Cardinal Girl's Softball team use the Marktown field as their home field. The smaller, second field is

currently being renovated with a new fence and infield. We heard of a number of complaints about the clay that was on the larger field, and what did the Park Department do? They replaced it with a new material that doesn't kick up all of that dust.

6. Your storm and sanitary sewers have been cleaned quarterly and no one, no one has complained about your basements backing up in over a year.

7. The sprinkler system for the parks is still in the planning stage. But what are we doing until it is installed? We have acquired 300 foot of inch-and-a half fire hose and a spray nozzle so that the park workers can keep your park looking good all summer long.

8. Summer recreation for your children has taken on an all new look. The Parks and Recreation Department has a great new STARS summer program that runs through July. If your children aren't involved, they should be.

9. The New Marktown Community Center is moving forward as planned. It took the neighborhood committee longer to decide what they wanted in the building than it did for the architects to fully

design the new 15,000 square foot building. The plans are complete and the bidding specifications are at the printers. If all goes well, we should be able to actually begin construction in September.

10. Summer Jobs for our children have been made available to a number of residents from Marktown. It is always a pleasure to see so many of our young people employed and active during the summer months. Congratulations to all of you who applied for and received employment this year.

This is an exciting time to be in East Chicago and especially in Indiana Harbor and Marktown. So much is happening so fast that it is often difficult to keep up with it. As Mayor Pastrick said at the ground breaking of the New Marktown Community Center this past April, "We're going to put Marktown back on the map." Together, all things are possible.

