

THE GATEWAY

FALL 2009

VOLUME II, ISSUE 3

Word from the Chairman, Nehemiah CDC



BRITT A. STARGHILL
CHAIRMAN NPCDC

“Lord, When Did We See You Sick?”

This question is a scriptural question that arises out of the mandated instructions from Christ to the faith community concerning the people in the world who are the most vulnerable in society and the responsibility of those who are in position to aid them in their afflictions. In Matthew 25: 42-45, where God ask the question of what is our duty to the most vulnerable people in our society. I particularly like the *Unvarnished Gospels*’ translation of this text where it says:

“Why, I was hungry and you wouldn’t give me anything to eat, I was thirsty and you wouldn’t give me anything to drink, I was wandering and you didn’t take me in, I was naked and you didn’t clothe me I was sick (without health-care) and in jail and you didn’t look after me.”

Then they will also answer, “Lord, when did we see you hungry, or thirsty or homeless or sick (without health-care) or in jail and we didn’t care for you”

Then he will answer, “Let me assure you, however much you wouldn’t do it for any of the least important of these people you wouldn’t do it for me either.”

We have in this country at least 47 million people who are without healthcare; (this was the statistics on health-care before the beginning of 2009). How could we tolerate this pandemic in our society? In the richest nation, with the largest economy in the world we endure a society where a large segment of people within our nation are not insured, this disparaging figure is exponential in a City like Camden. According to CamConnect (a fact gathering organization in Camden), the number one most frequently discussed issue in this city is having no coverage for prescriptions, due to poverty. This is our reality today; on one hand, we have a nation where many people are willing to pay ‘a hefty one million dollars per soldier’ in Afghanistan next year for war, on the other hand, too many are contented knowing many people within our very community lack adequate health care. (Afghanistan is a nation that based on history; we could never win nor bring democracy to the people regardless of how long our troops are deployed there). Moreover, thousands of people die in this country every year from lack of good health care. Further, hundreds of thousands of Americans go bankrupt every year because of medical bills.



Those Americans who die or go broke because they happened to get sick represent a fundamental moral decision our country has made. Despite all the rights, privileges, and entitlements that Americans enjoy today, we have never decided to provide medical care for **everyone who needs it**. In the world’s richest nation, we accept a health care system that leads to

large numbers of avoidable deaths and bankruptcies among our fellow citizens. Efforts to change the system tend to be derailed by arguments about “big gov-

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

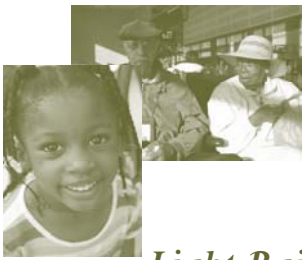
- ◆ New Transit Improvements and Opportunity for the Gateway Community!
- ◆ Community Resource Facility Progress
- ◆ Building Update
- ◆ Updates, Congratulations, and More!



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>Light Rail</i>	2
<i>Properties</i>	2
<i>Environmental</i>	3
<i>New Faces</i>	3
<i>Financials</i>	4

(CONTINUED PG 4)



Light Rail Plan in Gateway to Move Forward

The Delaware River Port Authority has announced that it will continue to move forward with a light rail plan that will run from the Walter Rand Transportation Center, in downtown Camden, to Rowan University including a planned stop in the Gateway Neighborhood. The development will utilize the existing Conrail Line and would likely not be completed for at least eight years. This is an exciting development for Camden



LIGHT RAIL STATION IN HOBOKEN, NJ

and specifically the NPCDC. While there are concerns that will need to be addressed and an inclusive community process will need to be ensured the opportunities that this could provide for the Gateway Community are impressive.

The importance of development around transit, which for years took a backseat, has again reached the forefront and New Jersey has been a leader in recent years. The New Jersey Transit Village program, which creates incentives for municipalities to develop around transit, has seen success in many communities specifically in the northern part of the state. The proximity to large employment institutions, population centers, and large parcels of vacant land provide a unique opportunity for the Nehemiah Community to make this work in Camden.

While it is early in the process it is at these times that key decisions are made and the public can make its voice heard. Currently initial DRPA plans provide for a stop at Walter Rand, Cooper, and then Atlantic Avenue without another stop until Glassboro.

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Effective Transit Can Provide a Number of Community Benefits That Include:

- * Reduction in traffic congestion
- * Reduced household spending on transportation and less time in transit
- * Healthier lifestyle with more walking and less stress
- * Enhanced ability to maintain economic competitiveness
- * Increase attractiveness for new businesses, jobs, and existing small businesses
- * Increase in stability and value of property
- * Funding from state and federal transit oriented development programs
- * Opportunities for residents to reach a larger pool of jobs and resources



NPCDC Moves Forward with Acquisitions of Key Properties

As a key element of its neighborhood revitalization plan the NPCDC has identified the need the acquire properties which are crucial for future development and are not currently being utilized in a manner that benefits the community. In the summer of 2008 the NPCDC took advantage of the XSPAND Program of the City's Tax Lien Financing Corporation which provided the opportunity to purchase the tax liens on properties that were eligible foreclosure, more than two years past due, at a highly reduced rate. At this time the NPCDC identified eligible properties which fit these criteria and purchased the tax liens to ten properties within the community – all which

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were vacant land or buildings – with the intent of acquisition and future revitalization. Since this time the NPCDC has moved forward with the necessary steps towards the legal acquisition of these parcels which can often take more than two years. The NPCDC purchased the tax liens on these properties making them the primary lien holder – this means the current owner can either pay back the back taxes to NPCDC at full price, which would result in a profit or allow the



VACANT SITE ACROSS FROM KAIGHN AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH

...WE NEED THE PARTICIPATION OF ALL PEOPLE TO "REBUILD THE WALLS" OF THIS COMMUNITY...



Making Sure the Land Is Safe, Clean

In recent months the NPCDC has discussed the exciting plans for a Community Resource Facility located on the two properties across 9th Street from Kaighn Avenue Baptist Church. While the planning, programming, partnering, and financing for this facility continue to move forward the NPCDC is now engaging in the equally important element of assessing the environmental state of the sites. This is especially important in the Camden which has a long history of environmental issues throughout the City.

This process is started by performing what is called a Preliminary Environmental Site Assessment. This will entail an examination of the land for potential soil contamination, surface and groundwater quality, and review of site history. The purpose of which is to ensure the site is suitable for the planned development. The NPCDC

is currently reviewing proposals from well know engineering firms in order to begin with what is called a Phase I Environmental Assessment. This will provide at least:

- Performance of an on-site visit to view present conditions specifically presence of hazardous substances, above or underground storage tanks and evaluate any likely environmental history
- Evaluation of risks of neighboring properties upon the subject property
- Review of Federal, State, Local Records out to distances specified by law
- Interview of persons knowledgeable regarding the property history Examine municipal or county planning files to check prior land usage and permits granted

- File searches with public agencies having oversight relative to environmental issues.
- Examine historic aerial photography

This initial review will determine the needs for further analysis. While these properties were likely residential dwellings in the recent past it is inherent that due diligence if performed in order to ensure the safety of future development.

The NPCDC hopes to move forward with the Preliminary Site Assessment within the coming months.



Need Your Help Too!

The Nehemiah Project CDC is a community initiative that will require a collaborative community effort. While the NPCDC and its board is working hard to champion change, it will take strong community to leadership become a viable and sustainable neighborhood. Please contact the NPCDC if you are interested in board membership or helping to build your community!

Properties (from pg. 2)

NPCDC to move forward with the foreclosure process. So far this process has included:

- * Acquisition of current title reports to each property
- * Procurement of a foreclosure lawyer who is proficient with the process in Camden
- * Coordination with the Camden City Tax Office to maintain current taxes
- * Analysis of properties for future development plans

Over the coming months the NPCDC will continue to work closely within the necessary guidelines in order to acquire these key properties.

Look for updates in our next newsletter!

New Faces at the NPCDC



In light of the recent departure of Shawn Brede, who has moved on to serve the United States Department of Commerce after spending the past three years with the NPCDC, we would like to introduce Andre Lennertz PP, AICP.

Mr. Lennertz is a licensed professional planner and has over 7 years of planning experience, 5 of which have been in New Jersey. Andre is devoted to assisting the NPCDC in its efforts to facilitate positive change in the physical, economic, and social assets of the community.

"...REBUILDING COMMUNITY IS A LONG AND ARDUOUS TASK THAT WILL REQUIRE THE FAITH AND HARD WORK OF ALL THOSE INVOLVED."



**QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE NEHEMIAH
PROJECT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

The Word (from pg. 1)

WE ARE ON THE WEB!
VISIT US ON OUR NEW
WEBSITE FOR IMPORTANT
UPDATES, EVENTS, AND
INFORMATION ON HOW
YOU CAN HELP!

WWW.NEHEMIAHCDC.ORG

ernment”, “free enterprise”, “socialism” – and the essential moral question gets lost in the shouting, polarizing, finger pointing, and political correctness.

All the other developed countries on earth have made a different moral- (Christian) decision. All the other countries like us – that is, wealthy, technologically advanced, industrialized democracies – guarantee medical care to anyone who gets sick, despite ones economic condition. Most importantly, based on a popular study, these nations have longer life expectancies, lower infant mortality, and better recovery rates from major diseases than the United States. Is this socialization? No, this is just the right moral answer to an egregious problem.

This is the reason we, Nehemiah CDC and Kaighn Avenue Baptist are so involved in redevelopment in Camden, because we know it is not just a moral issue this is a divine question that God demands of humanity for ‘the very least of these’ – the Poor. The scripture says, “When you have done this for the poor, the hungry, the thirsty, widows, children, *and the sick*”- You have done it for me!

The work continues!

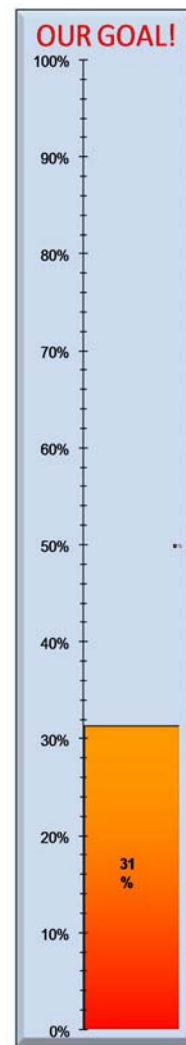


Faith - o - Meter
Know your goals!

Help us Rebuild the
NPCDC
Community



Donations to:
Nehemiah Project CDC
www.nehemiahcdc.org



MORE THAN \$70,000 HAS BEEN RAISED JUST THIS YEAR! HELP INVEST IN OUR COMMUNITIES FUTURE!



Nehemiah Project Community
Development Corporation
P.O. Box 2031
Camden, New Jersey 08101-2031
Phone: 856 365 0034
E-mail: info@nehemiahcdc.com

The Nehemiah Project Community Development Corporation (NPCDC) is a certified 501(c) (3) non-profit organization located in the Gateway neighborhood of Camden, New Jersey. The explicit purpose of the NPCDC is to promote the holistic revitalization of the community surrounding the Kaighn Avenue Baptist Church

Light Rail (from pg. 2)

Heart of Camden a well established and respected community development corporation which serves the Waterfront South Neighborhood of Camden has contracted CamConnect to analyze the planned stops and service of the line. The Nehemiah Project CDC will coordinate closely with Heart of Camden and other community stakeholders to ensure Camden is best represented as plans move forward. For questions regarding upcoming public meetings or interest in supporting our effort please email info@nehemiahcdc.org with “Transit” as the subject header.

