



Browncroft Crier

NEWSLETTER OF THE BROWNCROFT NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

SINCE 1973 - Volume #204

P.O. Box 10127, Rochester, New York 14610
<http://browncroftna.org>

Summer/Fall 2021

BROWNCROFT NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION ISSUE

“The purpose of BNA is: to promote, organize, and carry on those activities which are intended to maintain and improve the character and quality of neighborhood living in the Browncroft area.” (Constitution and By-Laws)



THE ORIGINS OF BNA AND WHY

by Dede Ranger

Maybe some of you wonder how and why the BNA came into existence. The present day Browncroft Neighborhood Association (BNA) came into formation in 1973. In 1972 the successful fight to eliminate the semi-tractor trailer truck traffic noise and vibrations on Browncroft Boulevard and Merchants Road made residents realize the organizing effort should not be allowed to disband. Residents realized the value of forming an ongoing organization to preserve the quality of life in the Browncroft neighborhood.

By-laws were drafted by Robert Genthner, public meet-

ings were held in the church at the corner of Browncroft Boulevard and Fairhaven Road and thus the beginnings of the BNA and its purpose to “promote, organize and carry on those activities which are intended to maintain and improve the character and quality of neighborhood living in the Browncroft area of the City of Rochester” came to be.

The BNA has continued the vision of the original developer, nurseryman Charles J. Brown’s, “dream to establish a completely planned and developed tract that would be a showplace.” This has been accomplished by some of the following

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BNA Executive Committee

Officers:

President

Cassy Petsos

Vice-President

To Be Approved

Secretary

Jim Davis

Treasurer

John McQueen

District Reps

Elm

James Nicholson

Corwin

Holly Petsos

Croydon

David D. Kaiser

BNA Email:

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Crier Editor -

Cassy Petsos

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President's Message... Cassy Petsos

The Browncroft Neighborhood Association since its beginning has been a strong example of what a neighborhood association should be. In fact, the City of Rochester has presented to all neighborhood groups a list of criteria that define a neighborhood association worthy of their recognition, and it reads like a description of what BNA has been for 49 years.

However, sustaining this organization is at question today, one year from its 50th anniversary. Of course it will depend on our current residents, and their willingness to be involved in neighborhood preservation volunteerism, in addition to their other volunteer and professional demands. In the past, a strong sense of neighborhood pride and community, including a strong PTA (Parents and Teachers Association), knit residents together to achieve many neighborhood accomplishments – from building a better school playground with fundraising, replanting Browncroft trees at School 46 through the Bill Knapp memorial fund, refurbishing a derelict Browncroft Rose Garden and striving to maintain it, working to retain the historic concrete streetlights, reinstalling two found street markers, advocating to preserve the historic integrity of School 46's architecture -- to many educational and social events carried out yearly.

As older residents leave us and a younger generation of residents have bought homes in Browncroft over the past 10 years, BNA has tried to foster the same neighborhood appreciation and sense of place through this newsletter and

neighborhood lectures at general meetings. Sometimes people are attracted to a place without knowing exactly why. Sure, the house is the first, and Browncroft has quality homes ranging in date from early 1900s to 1960s. But do they focus on the amenities and the esthetics of the general neighborhood around them, or wonder why there is a charm to Browncroft – yes, a charm?

I “Grew Up In Browncroft” and I am one in an army of former kids that carry Browncroft in their hearts wherever they go, only I have been lucky enough to stay. Check out their social media by that name. It has lots of history photos.

Additionally, many of my generation moved back into the neighborhood as adults with their own children. Others have stories of how angry they were with their parents when they moved them to other cities, and they return to visit to this day.

Many visiting Browncroftonians coming home after living in other areas of the country are amazed and gratified that it seems to be unchanged. They have seen so much negative development in the cities where they currently reside, and cannot believe that it has not happened here. Is this a lucky coincidence, or the determination and work of many Browncroft residents to ensure that this neighborhood holds on to its character? I think the latter.

Some of those “many” volunteers through the years are still at it, but cannot be much longer.

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MEMBERSHIP DRIVE STARTS

Readers may recall that the official BNA membership drives were previously held in the fall. It was postponed in fall of 2020 to June of 2021 to put it in sync with the BNA fiscal year.

Memberships were received from residents, however, in 2020 and April through July this year. These memberships will be counted as dues paid for the 2021-2022 BNA year.

Thank you to all who showed their support by paying dues, and also, those who generously made an additional contribution.

Everyone else who would like to join BNA may do so by sending \$10 using the BNA self addressed envelope. Please fill out your identification and contact information on the preprinted form that is part of the envelope.

Please see Sharon Bloemendaal's piece below regarding reasons to join a neighborhood association like BNA. Thank you.

WHY JOIN BNA?

The Browncroft Neighborhood Association (BNA) works tirelessly in the background to maintain and improve the neighborhood and keep it attractive and interactive.

I believe that without it, we would have zoning violations ignored, with multiple families or businesses in houses zoned R-1, with cars parked on lawns and streets crowded with parked cars. Our board members speak out at multiple zoning meetings downtown every year.

The Beautification committee helps maintain our centrally located city park, the Browncroft

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NEW OFFICERS

The individuals who will be serving as BNA Officers for the 2021 to 2022 year are:

Acting President, Cassy Petsos

Cassy has lived in Browncroft her whole life. Her grandparents bought a house on Browncroft Boulevard in 1949, and her parents followed a year later, next door. "I have been involved in neighborhood work my entire adult life, and a member of BNA since it's first year, working on beautification, traffic, zoning, historic preservation, and the newsletter. Browncroft is an idyllic place to live with its shady streets, unique landscape and quality architecture. I would hope that its stability and charming environment will continue long into the future for residents after me to experience."

Treasurer, John McQueen

John says he and his wife, Kathy have lived in Browncroft for 42 years and have loved it from the start. "The physical appeal of the neighborhood (beautiful homes, yards, streetlights, streetscape), the urban location and the friendliness of the neighbors make Browncroft the premier spot in the City. Our four children enjoyed where they lived and made lifelong friends here." John is a lawyer who has been with Nixon Peabody since 1977. John promises to keep the books balanced and cash your checks quickly.

Secretary, Jim Davis

"I, as BNA Secretary, appreciate the opportunity to contribute to a wonderful city neighborhood. My wife and I grew up in Wisconsin

and came to Rochester by way of Chicago. When I first came to Rochester as an electrical engineer for Eastman Kodak, I worked in the Carlson building on the corner of Carlson and Humbolt streets, and walked in the Browncroft neighborhood over my lunch hour to appreciate the wonderful houses and park-like landscape. Many years later, after a short time living in San Diego CA, we relocated back to Rochester and purchased our current home on Ramsey Park, where we have lived for six years.

My current occupation is as a photonics test engineer for AIM Photonics. My hobbies include running, music, and building and repairing vacuum tube electronics."

President's Message

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volunteers through the years are still at it, but cannot be much longer. The time is now for younger people to step up to neighborhood volunteerism, to get the feel for what works and can be sustainable from the veterans.

Like myself, one might ask "Why in this flawed world that is scheduled to fry or flood within the next two decades should we focus on this little corner of the world"? I believe focusing on and preserving the first level in a community - nimbyism - is an impetus for caring about the rest of the community and the environment, and at the beginning of much grass roots organizing.

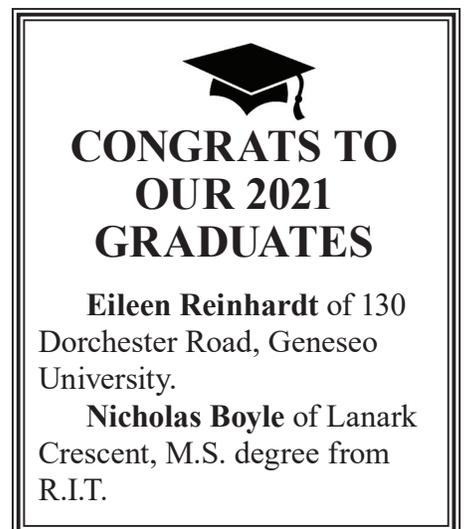
And hopefully, with a little care, Browncroft will continue to provide a haven for almost 700 families for another 50 years.

BNA PLANS FOR ICE CREAM SOCIAL SCRAPPED

The BNA Board of Directors had planned to sponsor an ice cream social in August as a way to bring neighbors out. It had been thought that inviting the Netskins Ice Cream truck to the Browncroft Rose Garden – a centrally located neighborhood park – and subsidizing the cost of an ice cream treat would be a fun idea borrowed from the Meadowbrook Neighborhood in Brighton.

However, when news media at the end of July was reporting a spike in covid-19 cases in Monroe County and elsewhere around the country, a resident doctor was consulted about whether it would be prudent to hold the event. Given that children would be an important part of such an event, and given that children are part of the population that are not vaccinated, the Board took another vote and decided to stay with BNA's original decision to hold no sponsored events in 2021.

One of the organizers had considered moving forward with it as an individual host.



HOW BNA WORKS ... OR BNA 101

BNA was started in 1973 with the adoption of a Constitution and Bylaws. It is not incorporated.

The Board of Directors meets every other month to review BNA finances, discuss neighborhood issues brought to its attention by residents and committees, review BNA ongoing planning of activities via oversight since the prior meeting, prepare for those coming up on the calendar, and plan neighborhood general membership meetings and events.

The Board consists of four Officers – President, Vice-President, Treasurer, and Secretary – the past president most recently retired, 17 Street Representatives, which are selected by the board from interested street residents of each street (see map), and the Chairperson of each Standing Committee. The charter Standing Committees are Budget and Finance, Crime Prevention, Beautification, Newsletter, and Zoning. Standing Committees that have been added as warranted by the activities of the organization include History (1984), Membership (2003), Communication (2006), among a few others that had a temporary mission. The map below shows the boundaries of BNA and the streets represented.

The Executive Committee, consisting of the four Officers, and three District Representatives (one street representative from the Elm District north of Browncroft Boulevard, the Corwin District from Browncroft Boulevard south to Dorchester Road, and the Croydon District that is south of Dorchester Road) meets on the alternating months to administer

the affairs of BNA consistent with the policy and directives from the Board.

The BNA fiscal year runs from June to May 31st. Funding is based on BNA membership dues and donations, as well as grants from third party fiduciaries.

All correspondence, BNA policy communications, and expenditures must be approved by the Board of Directors. The President is the official spokesperson for BNA and authorized by the Board of Directors, unless the Board authorizes another.

Membership is open to those who have an interest in promoting the objectives and purposes of BNA and the dues are currently \$10 per year. The only privilege of paid individual membership is the right to vote at the annual meeting for the election of officers. Though membership is based on payment of dues, all households within the BNA boundaries receive a newsletter in order for residents to be informed about, and participate in, neighborhood meetings, events, and issues.

An Annual Membership Meeting is held usually in May of each year where the election of officers for the in-coming year is voted upon by dues paying members. Usually, a guest speaker is in attendance to provide information on topics of interest to the neighborhood. Other general

membership meetings have traditionally been held to inform the neighborhood on important topics, with guest speakers such as City of Rochester staff; as well as Candidates Nights organized by BNA, usually in tandem with other neighborhood organizations.

BNA is a non-partisan organization, and does not take any political position or endorse candidates for elective office.



To reference lists of officers, street representatives, committees and committee chairpersons, Constitution and By-Laws, past newsletters, and more, visit the BNA website at Browncroftna.org.

BNA COMMENTS TO PLANNING COMMISSION ON UPCOMING CODE AMENDMENT AS SUBMITTED:

June 28, 2021

Rochester City Council
City of Rochester Planning
Commission
30 Church Street
Rochester, New York 14604

Re: Comments for Consideration
in Zoning Code Rewrite

Dear Planning Commission
Members and City Council

The Browncroft Neighborhood Association Board of Directors issued a letter statement to the City of Rochester Planning Commission dated October 3, 2019 outlining its concerns relating to the proposed zoning code changes in the Vision 2034 plan. A copy is attached for your reference, as our position remains the same.

We have received only three objections to these comments from neighborhood residents. These comments have been published in the Browncroft Crier newsletter which is distributed to all 670 households, and posted on BNA Announce.

We request that the City of Rochester and the Planning Commission seriously consider these points as they develop the amended zoning code.

Thank you for your consideration.

Holly Petsos
Zoning Chairperson on behalf of
the Board of Directors



BROWNCROFT NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION
P.O. Box 18127, Rochester, New York 14610
www.browncroft.org
founded in 1973

October 3, 2019

Planning Commission of the City of Rochester
30 Church Street
Rochester, New York 14609

Re: Vision 2034 Comprehensive Plan

Dear Members of the Planning Commission:

After careful review of issues to be addressed in the City of Rochester's Vision 2034, the Browncroft Neighborhood Association respectfully requests consideration of the following points:

1. Neighborhoods such as Browncroft should be considered as successful examples of quality urban living, and as desirable alternatives which attract people who would otherwise choose to live in the suburbs. Browncroft is not only aesthetically pleasing, it is walkable (not automobile dependent!), close to cultural resources, services, retail and public transportation. Comprised of over 670 residences, Browncroft is a large and flourishing portion of the city. Rather than altering successful and high-demand neighborhoods through zoning and planning changes, we believe that encouraging investment in, and redevelopment of, areas bordering high-demand neighborhoods would productively address Vision 2034's goals.
2. Unlike many urban areas, there is not a housing shortage within the City of Rochester. A great deal of housing has fallen into disrepair and/or abandonment as a result of predatory lending practices or neglectful absentee landlords. These issues can and should be addressed administratively or through appropriate legislation rather than through zoning changes which would affect neighborhoods such as Browncroft.
3. We are particularly concerned about proposed changes to the City's Zoning code, as applicable to areas such as our neighborhood, currently zoned as R-1. While we certainly would support changes such as making the definition of "family" or "related" more inclusive, and clarifying that activities such as maintaining an in-home office were permitted uses, we strongly believe that the following features of the current zoning law should be maintained:
 - Whether called R-1 or "Low Density Residential", zoning should specify "single family residential" as the only permitted use. We believe that adding a second or subordinate residence to an existing single family lot would overcrowd and degrade neighborhoods, as well as decrease green space and increase runoff. It is our understanding that Dorraine Kirkmire,

Planning Commission
October 2, 2019
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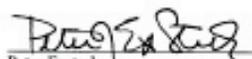
The City's Manager of Planning, advised the Planning Commission in a September 9th presentation to them that many negative comments had been received about permitting additional subordinate units on single family properties, and that she verbally committed to initially not including this proposal in the new zoning code. The Browncroft Neighborhood Association requests that no provisions supporting additional units on single family properties be included in any current or future revisions of the City Zoning Code.

- Permitted home business and commercial uses for such zones should be narrowly and specifically described to avoid ambiguity.

- Existing legal non-conforming uses should be permitted to continue, but future conversions should be prohibited.

The Browncroft Neighborhood Association respectfully requests that this letter summarizing our official comments regarding the Vision 2034 Plan be incorporated into the official Planning Commission file.

Yours Truly,


Peter Easterly
President


Holly Petsos
Zoning Chairperson

Cc: Mayor Lovely Warren
City Council Members

Go Green.

CITY COMPOST PILOT PROGRAM ROCS

The city launched on July 1st its ROC City Compost program as part of its Climate Action Plan. This is an innovative environmental step forward to divert food waste away from other landfill waste and turn it into something valuable – compost.

This pilot program will enlist 1,000 participants, and as of August 11th, 850 have signed up. City crews are still delivering toolkits but already the program has diverted more than two tons of organic materials from the city refuse stream. This translates into less methane gas, a major greenhouse gas, escaping into the atmosphere.

Community composting is taking off across America. Often it isn't practical to compost on small lots in dense urban areas, though gardeners and environmentalists want to do so. Locally, the city partnered with Impact Earth, Inc to realize the pilot program.

This is how it works:

1. Sign-up or call 311 to participate in the program.
2. After completing a short survey by email you will receive a free toolkit of materials (program guide, acceptable materials list, drop-off locations and schedule, small countertop bucket, larger collection bucket, and biobag liners for your small bucket).
3. Follow the guidelines to collect food waste in your daily small bucket. Then transfer it to the larger bucket, which you bring every week to one of the City's drop-off locations (see below).
4. At the drop-off location, City staff will sign you in, weigh your bucket of food waste, empty it and hand it back to you so that you can continue to collect food waste and drop-off on a weekly basis. The collected food waste will be transported to a processing facility to be recycled into compost.
5. In the spring, participants will have access to free compost for their gardens.

One participating Browncroft resident says "The drop off is easy. A staff person does the dumping... I keep the "daily waste" in a sealed container in the refrigerator and transfer to the lined bin when it is full."

This writer also participates, and has found the process quite easy to do, and odorless. Both buckets are easy to clean each time, especially if one uses the biobag liner in the small bucket and a paper bag in the large.

Drop off locations: Genesee Valley Park, 131 Elmwood Ave., 9 a.m. to noon Wednesdays; and 1 to 4 p.m. Saturdays or Cobbs Hill Park, 100 Norris Drive, 1 to 4 p.m. Wednesdays; and 9 a.m. to noon Saturdays.

For more information on the Roc City Compost or to participate in the pilot program, visit www.cityofrochester.gov/compost/.



BNA How and Why

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endeavors: the retention and replication of the original street lights, funding to subsidize trees lost during the 1991 ice storm to maintain the historic landscape of the Brown Brothers nursery, the rededication and refurbishing of the Rose Garden at the intersection of Browncroft Boulevard and Merchants Road, designation of Browncroft as an historic district on the State and National Register of Historic Places, and working with the Rochester City School District to restore - rather than replace - the historic original wooden windows at #46 school are to mention a few.

This organization, through the work of volunteers, addresses the needs of our community by hosting lectures on a variety of topics, publishing a newsletter, organizing the biennial garage sale, picnics, holiday buffets, clambakes, movies in the park, garden tours, etc. and providing books for incoming kindergarten students at #46.

But probably the most critical and controversial aspect of BNA is enforcing zoning and maintaining the integrity of our neighborhood with the City of Rochester and the Rochester City School District.

As volunteers, we do the best we can to maintain the legacy and vision of the Brown Brothers and of the neighborhood. We are always seeking participation in the BNA and/or your input on issues that are of concern to you. Regardless of our many views, we choose to live in a neighborhood that has a special place in our hearts.

Dede Ranger is a 40+ year resident, and past President of BNA (1985,86 and 2006).

Cassy Petsos

BROWNCROFT TREE TRIBUTES

This spring more important Browncroft Landscape trees were replaced on private property, where the Brown Brothers Nursery placed the subdivision's shade trees.

Tim Kehl at 235 Browncroft had to remove one of the huge sentinel maple trees that adorned the gateway into the neighborhood at the opening of Newcastle Road at Browncroft. When a huge section of the tree dropped off two years ago, the tree's impending doom was mourned. Tim had to remove it, but has promptly planted a sizeable young maple in its stead.

Bob Beauchamp and Joan Beauchamp at 130 Newcastle Road, participating in the "Let's Get Shady" reforest Historic Browncroft initiative, planted a sugar maple in front of their house.

Also as part of this historic preservation initiative an additional tree was replaced in the Newcastle



line at the 46 School playground, purchased by Cassandra Petsos in memory of Arly and Doug Anderson of Dorchester Road, and planted by the Rochester City School District. Arly and Doug were major advocates for Historic

WHO WAS CHARLES BROWN?

Charles Brown coined the name "Browncroft" for his subdivision, with space for gardens, as a "croft" was a field in England.

Brown was an entrepreneur, horticulturalist, and co-founder of Brown Brothers Nursery. In 1894 he and his brother Robert bought the Steven Corwin farm for their nursery, with the office in the Corwin farmhouse (now apartments at the corner of Corwin and Winton Roads).

He doubled the size of the farmhouse for his home, and built a house to the north for his parents and sister, Mary Jane, who also worked for the company. To the south was the duck pond, and an office for 35 workers, with adjacent tennis courts.

The company expanded to Chicago and Toronto; his brother died in 1904.

By 1914 he formed the Browncroft Realty Corporation

Browncroft.

Newcastle Road's Browncroft streetscape is coming back in the 100s section and down the street toward Browncroft is shaping up, also, with Tim's and the Hoffman family's plantings.



with his son-in-law, George J. Kaelber, forming 300 acres into lovely homes. The company's deeds specified lots of a certain size, with no "Boston flats" or apartments. He landscaped the area between the sidewalks and the streets (the parkways), with wisteria, lilacs, and Austrian pines at the intersections, some of which are still living. The decorative 8.5-foot street sign posts were marked "Browncroft"; you can still find three today that survived the WWII metal scrap drives.

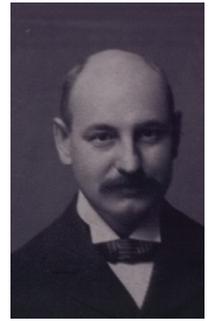
Nearby land to the north, the Shiel and Kingsbury farms and the Charlton nursery, were also subdivided, as was the De Potter farm on Blossom Rd.

Charles Brown influenced the renaming of a section of Atlantic Ave. as Browncroft Blvd. He invested heavily in the Browncroft Extension (now Brighton Browncroft, east of I-590), even building a lovely bridge over a ravine. He built streets for future homes, but the Depression caused his bankruptcy.

Brown died in 1933, but his dream lives on in the lovely Browncroft neighborhood filled with gracious homes. These homes have character, and so do the people who live here!

Learn more in the 32-page booklet, *Browncroft, a Beautiful Section of a Beautiful City*, written in 1984; read it at www.BrowncroftNA.org.

—Sharon Bloemendaal
History Chair



ELLISON PARK TO SEE IMPROVMENTS

Many Browncroft residents take advantage of nearby Ellison Park, the first park in the Monroe County park system. Whether it is the picnic areas, hiking trails, dog park, shelters, tennis courts, or open green areas good for sports or vistas, it is an important part of our quality of life.

Any regular user cannot have missed the deteriorated condition of the main parking lot on Blossom Road and the park roads, both blocked off from vehicular traffic for a couple of years. Improvements are slated, under a comprehensive capital improvement program (CIP) for county parks, for these and other facilities in Ellison.

The county is contemplating raising the foundations of the shelters, which have become below grade from years of flooding and silt deposits. The attractive rustic shelters would remain intact; however, by raising the foundations, the time and expense of shoveling many inches of silt and pumping water off of the floors each year will be eliminated.

The old tiered rose garden, at the bottom of the hill off Landing Road, nestled in a rounded hollow that was once a quarried area, will also continue to be upgraded. Volunteers from Landing Road started refurbishing the area approximately five years ago, which influenced the County to join in with arbors and stone benches. The plan is to turn it into a wedding photo destination that the County can capitalize on, similarly to the Sunken Garden behind the castle in Highland Park.



This year the park saw new signs directing visitors to the shelters and pavilions after the previous modern signs had deteriorated and been removed over a year ago. The new signage is traditional with routed lettering, which should last indefinitely.

Why Join?

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Rose Garden, and makes recommendations for trees to plant. A big “Thank You” to all the volunteers who help trim roses and weed.

The history committee’s slide show gives a depth to our understanding of what was here in the past, showing what shaped our neighborhood. It continues to collect material for the archives. The BNA worked with the 1984 Sesquicentennial Committee to produce a 32- page booklet about Browncroft history, which was the beginning of this collection. You can find the complete text of this history book on the BNA website, another service to our neighborhood.

The picnics, events and speakers make us more informed, and our lives more interesting, and we get to meet our neighbors. The garage sale has helped us recycle stuff most effectively, and now people from the area know where our neighborhood is.

NORTH WINTON VILLAGE FESTIVAL TO RETURN

NWV will hold their festival as planned earlier in the year. It will be held in the Linear Garden on East Main on Saturday, September 18, 2021.

As usual goers will find arts and crafts, live music, food and fun. Expect some Covid protocols to be in effect, if you go.

This festival is an important fund raiser for NWV to cover their Safety Center rent, Winton Road flower planting, and other expenses.

Over the years, we have had a food co-op, progressive dinners, clam bakes and kiddie parades.

The neighborhood has improved since we moved here in 1970—yes, 51 years ago. We believe it is due to the BNA, which was founded in 1973. With more volunteers from our current ranks of residents the work will continue and even more could be accomplished.

This is a great neighborhood to live in. Your \$10 dues is a small donation to help keep it that way—and even improve it. It is expensive to print our newsletter, which is written, formatted, collated and delivered by volunteers to every house.

Thank you to all volunteers who make our neighborhood one of the best in the city.

Check us out at www.BrowncroftNA.org, our fantastic website maintained by Bob Genthner.

—Sharon Bloemendaal