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JANUARY 2018

We hope to see
you there!

- **South District Town Hall** on Thursday, January 18th at 6 p.m.
Location: Downing-Gross Cultural Arts Center, 2410 Wickham Avenue. See back page of Newsletter for more information.
- **Teen Clock-In Lock-In** on January 26–27, 2018 from 8 p.m. to 7 a.m. at Brittingham-Midtown Community Center. Open to Newport News High School students. See back page of Newsletter for more information.

Interested in finding out
more about CNI?
Please give us a call or
check out our website!

Have You Heard?

As of the 7th of January 2018, the Newport News Redevelopment and Housing Authority (NNRHA) is the owner of the Waterfront Lumber Company property. The 4-acre site is at 1200 Jefferson Avenue, adjacent to Ridley Place. A portion of the property was originally developed as a gas station. Waterfront Lumber Company took over the parcel in 1974 and remained in operation until 2017. In early December 2017, the U.S. Bankruptcy Court granted approval to sell the property.

NNRHA will abate hazardous materials and have the buildings demolished. The property is a key opportunity site for development under the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative (CNI) Transformation Plan. Check out the draft Transformation Plan at www.newportnewschoice.com for more information about proposed housing and neighborhood investments.

\$500,000 Redevelopment Grant for Chase Bag Property

In November 2017, the Governor's Office announced that the Economic Development Authority of the City of Newport News (EDA) was awarded a \$500,000 competitive grant by the Virginia Economic Development Partnership to fund the continued cleanup of the former Chase Packaging site in the Southeast Community. The EDA acquired the property in July 2017 with an initial goal to positively impact surrounding neighborhoods by improving the site's appearance and safety. Substantial amounts of debris left behind by the previous owner have already been removed. The new funding will speed up completion of the remaining cleanup work.

Originally, the property was part of the Horace E. Dodge Boat and Plane Factory, which opened as a 210,000 square-foot, manufacturing facility for pleasure boats in spring of 1930. Most recently, it housed Chase Packaging, a business that converted paper into flexible packaging. The unique location of this scenic waterfront property and its transformational potential for the surrounding community has long been apparent. It is identified as a major asset in the Marshall-Ridley Choice



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For questions or to **VOLUNTEER**, please contact:
Garrett Morgan, Senior Planner at gmorgan@nnva.gov
Phone: 757.926.8761 (Department of Planning)
Britta Ayers, Manager of Comprehensive Planning at bayers@nnva.gov



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Neighborhood Transformation Plan, and its revitalization will be a major part of neighborhood transformation.

The grant award will enhance the City's capacity to move forward with redevelopment in the area, as well as reduce the period of time required.

Draft Transformation Plan Submitted to HUD

The CNI planning team presented revised neighborhood development concepts, goals and strategies to the community at a workshop on December 14, 2017 at Marshall Early Learning Center. More than 75 residents joined staff and community partners to see the results of the community's hard work over the past year. The revisions were then incorporated into the Draft Marshall-Ridley Choice Neighborhood Transformation Plan, which was submitted to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) by the December 28, 2018 due date.

If you were not able to attend the workshop, please check out the draft plan at www.newportnewschoice.com. Questions about the plan? Call Garrett Morgan or Britta Ayers at 757.926.8761.

What Is Going On With Early Action Activities?

Early Action Activities are actions or projects that can be completed during the CNI planning process and will enhance transformation and engage the community in both planning and implementation. Early Action Activities funds are set aside for these actions and

cannot be used for non-physical uses such as staffing, supportive services, or redevelopment of public housing. Funds are intended to support actions such as beautification, placemaking and community arts, or transforming vacant property into pocket parks or community gardens.

Ideas for Early Action Activities were gathered through the planning process and shared with the Early Action Activities Subcommittee to determine which specific actions could be completed by the end of this coming summer. This subcommittee, which includes over a dozen residents and property owners, developed the scopes of the selected activities, that when implemented, are considered to have the greatest positive impact on the neighborhood: [King-Lincoln Park and Waterfront Restoration](#), [Neighborhood Branding](#), and [Celebrating the Arts](#). These activities were carefully selected over the course of several meetings and discussions, and involved research, site visits, conversations with other residents, and cost analyses. The activities involve physical improvements that will enhance and celebrate the distinctive character of the neighborhood.



Mr. Ernest Thompson shared the history of Pinkett's Beach with residents last summer.

The CNI planning team has submitted the required project information to HUD to request release of funds to implement these Early Action Activities. In the coming months, we will roll up our sleeves and begin "doing" while we wrap up our planning process. Stay tuned for more information on the Early Action Activities on the Choice Neighborhood website at www.newportnewschoice.com.

Meet Celeita Scott, Resident and Community Planning Liaison

This month, the CNI planning team had the opportunity to interview Celeita Scott. Ms. Scott is a Choice Neighborhood resident, President of the Ridley Place Tenant Council, and active planning process participant. She has been engaged in the planning process since it kicked off in fall 2016, is a graduate of the Neighborhood Leadership Series, and is committed to the implementation process as we move forward.

How long have you lived in the neighborhood?

I moved back here in 2009. Before I moved to Ridley Place I was living in a homeless shelter in Hampton with my children for five months.

What are some of the things that you like best about the neighborhood?

There's a park at the end of my street, my kids' schools are close to the house, and I can walk to work. Even though it's not that pretty to look at, I like the Marshall-Ridley Neighborhood. I walk on 16th Street frequently. You can tell that the neighborhood has the potential to be better.

What are three challenges that you think need to be addressed in the neighborhood to improve the overall quality of life?

The apartment buildings aren't in good condition at all, there aren't activities for our children to participate in, and there's a lot of crime in the area. Crime, however, has had a particularly negative impact on our family. When I first moved to Ridley, my mother and brother came to visit. While they were here, someone was shot in front of my house. The bullet ended up in my mom's rental car. Another time, when I still owned my van, I was hanging clothes outside while my youngest son was playing in the front room of my unit. He was looking outside the window at me when someone was shot in front of my house. One of the bullets blew out one of my tires. We were right there. It was a sunny, morning. Even though it happens frequently, you never get used to it.

What have you learned from the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative planning process? What do you hope to carry forward as you continue to grow as a neighborhood leader? What would you like other residents to know about the process?

One thing I have learned is that things do take time and there's so much work going on behind the scenes that community members often don't see. The people working on this project are genuinely concerned about seeing a positive change in our neighborhood. The change I want to see has to start with me; there are so many areas that need to be addressed with our neighborhood, but I can't sit back and complain about it. I believe that whatever I can do, no matter how small, can still make an

impact. This momentum is what I plan to carry forward. The process really does take time and it's a lot of work, people are putting their all into this and are going over and beyond to see this through, it's going to take patience and participation in order to see the finished work.

Youth Symposium Participation

Community Partners and CNI People Task Force Members Yugonda Sample-Jones, Jamal Harris, and Teresa Jones joined neighborhood youth from Lassiter Courts, Ridley Place, and Marshall Courts at the first Annual Silence EMPOWERS Violence Youth Symposium on December 21, 2017 at the South Morrison Family Education Center. Youth participants are students at Heritage High School and/or active in the Newport News Youth Services and Youth & Gang Violence Prevention Team programs. Youth participants were engaged and discussed ways to stop violence in their communities.

The Catalyst Effect and partners hosted the symposium to bring awareness to the negative effects of silence in the face of community violence.

Making a Difference This Holiday Season

The Family Investment Center's (located at 600 Ridley Place) Adopt-A-Family Program assisted over 60 families over the Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday season with food baskets, gift cards, newly purchased clothing, coats, bicycles, laptops, and much more. Christmas was made a



little brighter for many of our residents thanks to the generous sponsorships from VA BLOC (Black Leadership Organizing Collaborative), the Scott and Price families, Newport News Shipbuilding, Peninsula Women's Care, World Life Victory Church, Kappa Iota Iota Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., and the Andrew Williams, Sr. Foundation.

Free Tax Preparation!

Tired of paying high tax preparation fees? Need help completing your tax return? Look no further: the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program, sponsored by the Newport News Redevelopment and Housing Authority is here to help you prepare and file basic tax returns for FREE.

Free tax preparation begins February 5, 2018 at the Family Investment Center, located at 600 C Ridley Circle. For more information, call [757.928.3680](tel:757.928.3680).

Veterans Housing Program

The Hampton Roads Community Action Program (HRCAP) opened its first house to help veterans in need of permanent housing. Located on Queen Street, the single-family home is fully furnished and provides residents with direct access to case managers.

The Veterans Housing Program provides a bridge from homelessness to permanent housing and offers housing counseling, income support services, assistance with Veterans Affairs benefits, and other community resources. Under the direction of the Peninsula Community Development Corporation and HRCAP Housing and Financial Literacy Services Program, each home in the program will serve up to a maximum of four veterans each year.

To enroll in the program, an individual must have reached the point in his/her transition from homelessness that he/she is ready and committed to achieving independent living. The program offers veterans the opportunity to assimilate and adopt many of the life skills necessary to successfully transition, including money management, being good neighbors, and obtaining income through sustained employment. Residents pay a rent of no more than 30% of their adjusted monthly income to live with other veterans in the single-family homes that are embedded in middle-class neighborhoods. Intensive case management services ensure veterans are pursuing a path towards self-sufficiency.

If you are interested in this program, please contact HRCAP at [757.247.0379](tel:757.247.0379).

Upcoming Events

Paint Nights at SoMo!

Newport News Department of Human Services (NNDHS) Youth Services presents Paint Nights at SoMo! This event is made possible through a grant funded by the Virginia Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control, Education and Prevention Programs. Parents and youth-serving professionals will engage in an evening of artistic fun: creating a one of a kind painting while educating themselves on the dangers of “social hosting” of alcohol to minors and underage drinking. This event is free and open to the public, but does require registration.

This event will happen on Fridays: January 19, February 16, and March 23, 2018 from 6 to 8:30 p.m. at the South Morrison Family Education Center (746 Adams Drive, Newport News, VA 23601). Contact NNDHS at [757.369.6800](tel:757.369.6800) for more information.

Teen “Clock-In Lock-In”

This event will take place January 26-27, 2018 from 8 p.m. to 7 a.m. at Brittingham-Midtown Community Center (570 McLawhorne Drive, Newport News, VA 23601). Sponsored by NNDHS Youth Services and Boys & Girls Clubs of the Virginia Peninsula, the lock-in is made possible in part through a grant funded by the Virginia Department of Alcoholic Beverage

Control, Education and Prevention Programs.

The lock-in is open to Newport News High School students and will feature a DJ, video games, basketball tournaments, a talent show, carnival games, food, and more. **Registration begins January 3, 2018.** Permission slips will be available from Pinedale Boys & Girls Club (705 Adams Drive), NNDHS Youth Services (South Morrison, 746 Adams Drive), or at the high schools.

Contact NNDHS at [757.369.6800](tel:757.369.6800) for more information.

Your Voice Matters

Join Councilmember Sandra Cherry in collaboration with Carlton Ashby (Newport News Public Schools Board Member) and Captain Tietjens (Newport News Police, South Precinct) at the next South District Town Hall Meeting for a dialogue. The topic will be “Transforming the Marshall-Ridley Choice Neighborhood.” This is an opportunity for residents and other neighborhood stakeholders who were unable to attend the Community Workshop in December to hear about the plan for revitalization and talk about next steps.

The Town Hall Meeting will take place on **Thursday, January 18, 2018** at Downing-Gross Cultural Arts Center from 6 to 7:30 p.m.

Check out www.newportnewschoice.com for all the latest project information and calendar of events.