

Lighting a Candle or Cursing the Dark

The task of revitalizing Dr. Martin Luther King Drive, the 26-block-long corridor that runs from Communipaw to McAdoo, is still, to this day, a work in progress. The early results of this labor of love, commitment and fortitude are evidenced by what is commonly called the "HUB" of the redevelopment plan. The HUB is the new "town center" for the Bergen-Lafayette community and the embryo of a growing long-term benefit for the city as a whole.

Though small in scale, the HUB is similar to the mustard seed in the biblical parables; it has the capacity and represents the promise of great growth, issuing forth great prosperity. Its value, right now in 2006, can be meas-

ured in many ways. Just ask a neighbor loading groceries into their car. Or ask a homeowner how the value of their property has increased since the Plaza, the light rail stop and a newly constructed post office became a reality. A friend from New York was visiting and needed to wire some money back home. He asked me about the nearest place he could go to send the money. I even surprised myself with the answer. Depending on one's preference, Bank of America inside of the supermarket can perform wire transfers, there's a Western Union (in Sudzland Laundromat), a money gram (in Everyday Business) and, of course, the U.S. Post Office for a money order. Believe it or not, we've come a long way, baby!

Think about it for a moment. The new firehouse relocated and built on Orient Avenue to replace the one that had been around since 1905 makes all of us feel a lot more comfortable in our homes. Emergency response time makes all the difference in the world between life and death.



Omar Barbour
Executive Director, MLKNDC.

Our community is better off than it was just a few short years ago. We made the right choices. The Light Rail stop at Martin Luther King Drive is a real plus for the community not a minus. Was it the right decision to oppose NJ Transit's plan not to build a grade stop at Martin Luther King Drive? Anyone who would like to know the value of the stop just needs to talk to one of the many pedestrian commuters who daily board the train at this location to go to work, school and play.

To put a stop at Martin Luther King was the right choice even if you count it only in brick and mortar. Improvements in the physical landscape are no small achievement. The appreciation in the value of the real estate in and around the HUB from what it once was is astounding.

Back in the mid-seventies, I attended the

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The new fire station replaced one that had been around since the early 1900s.

ceremony renaming Jackson Avenue to Martin Luther King Drive in tribute to the slain Civil Rights leader and Nobel Peace Prize recipient. The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King's father, Rev. Martin Luther King, Sr., was the guest of honor at the ceremony.

According to former Councilman Cornelius Parker, an advocate of the street renaming, Rev. King, Sr

Decadent, desolate, destitute and moribund, instead of Pentecost and Jerusalem, Shady Rest represented everything that both Rev. Kings, father and son, opposed

We have come this far by faith and belief, and endured the worst of times so as to some day enjoy the best of times.

and worked to change.

Is there any wonder that a new

must do. It's the fertilization of the soil. The putting down of long-term roots. We, in this community, are the stakeholders, the true beneficiaries. Now is the

time to reinvest our efforts and understand what the HUB means for

every soul who lives within its scope.



A community in transition—before, during and after redevelopment.

was not pleased with what he saw He was upset at the despair and degradation he witnessed on that day. The area of Martin Luther King Drive that Rev. King saw was known locally as Shady Rest, as close to a modern day Sodom and Gomorrah as one could get.

seed had to be planted? A new seed that stood for that which is good and righteous. A seed that with care and cultivation would not only grow but prosper as well The HUB is that new seed that hasn't had the time to fully germinate and grow. New housing is a

We can overcome the consequences of a bad harvest. The problems that plague the Martin Luther King Plaza and the Redevelopment Plan are not insurmountable. On the contrary, we have come this far by faith (continued on page 7)

Heroes and Heroines in the Neighborhood: Dr. Edith Bland Phillips Honored in Joyous Celebration

Dr. Edith Bland Phillips was honored on August 12th. She received the 2005 Community Hero and Heroine Appreciation Award for her outstanding service and commitment to the people of Jersey City with a tribute held on the Brick Promenade at Martin Luther King Plaza. It was a beautiful summer evening and the people responded to the music and the love created by Dr. Phillips. The Plaza has become the center of commerce and social interaction for the African American community in Jersey City.

It was a joyous celebration that featured many artists who had been Dr. Phillips' students. Dr. Phillips has been a renowned resident of Jersey City for more than fifty years. Early on, she excelled at P.S. 14, Lincoln High School and Jersey City State College. She went on to earn three Masters degrees and two Doctorate degrees.



Dr. Edith Bland Phillips at the celebration where she received the 2005 Community Hero and Heroine Appreciation Award.

Her deep knowledge of music, theology and education has served her well in her lifelong career as educator, music director and mentor to many leading lawyers, doctors and musicians, including the Bell brothers of Kool and the Gang.

Dr. Phillips attended Teachers'

College at Columbia University, Julliard School of Music and the Union Theological Seminary with distinction. To her great credit, she took her considerable knowledge and wisdom back to her Jersey City community to enrich and share her gifts with its youth.

Dr. Phillips is the mother of Jerome Phillips (international record producer, arranger and performer) and the proud grandmother of three wonderful grandchildren, twins Kiera and Tenaya and two-year-old Shiloh, all presently residing in Melbourne, Australia.

Dr. Phillips has committed her life to God, family, community, education and music. She never relented from her quest to achieve even in the worse of times. On August 12th 2005, she was celebrated for her passion and spirit by those whom she has taught, befriended and mentored over her many decades of service to church, education and her community. □

Lighting a Candle (continued from page 3)

and belief and endured the worst of times so as to some day enjoy the best of times. Dr. Rev. Ralph E. Brower, Senior Pastor at Saint Michael Methodist Church, a noted theologian, teaches his congregation that it is infinitely better to light a candle than to curse the

dark. We all can learn a lesson from the teachings of Dr. Brower, being the wise sage that he is. Lighting a candle versus cursing the dark of hopelessness and despair is much more noble and in keeping with the tradition of believing that where there is a will there is a way.

We as a community still have a lot of work to do to make

Dr. King's dream of economic and social equality a reality and to make Martin Luther King Drive the type of thoroughfare that the Rev. Martin Luther King, Sr. would be proud to bear the name of his son and namesake.

Omar Barbour
Executive Director □

LIFELINE



"Our life begins to end the moment we become silent about things that really matter." Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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MARTIN
LUTHER
KING
PLAZA:
CELEBRATING
OUR 6TH YEAR

A Tale of Two Cities



*Martin Luther King Plaza
Grand Opening 2000.*



Jersey City Waterfront.

From the vantage point of New York City, across the Hudson River, Jersey City's waterfront skyline looks like what Emerald City must have looked to Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz, a gleaming wonderland. But looks can be deceiving. Jersey City's waterfront is just one of the city's many faces. It was not very long ago that the face of Jersey City's western waterfront was not that pleasant to look at. After the manufacturing sector left the city to find cheaper labor elsewhere, the riverfront went into decline. Factories, docks and piers lay fallow and underutilized, creating an eyesore visible from passing boats and the New York City shoreline. But similar to other American Cities, Jersey City found a way to turn a land liability into an asset. By changing the use of the waterfront to allow for the establishment of new communities, new businesses and new jobs, Jersey City's waterfront property became the crown

jewel in what is commonly referred to as the new "gold coast" on the west side of the Hudson river. Over the past two decades, the enterprise has resulted in Jersey City becoming home to some of the biggest Fortune 500 companies in the nation. Top real estate developers from around the world found Jersey City a desirable place to build.

However, the waterfront revival is only one of several efforts to revitalize our city in order to keep pace with other cities competing for investment and job growth. With the shift of land use from manufacturing and shipping to service-oriented industries, the blue-collar jobs were being lost at record rates. As employment opportunities were disappearing, the rate of poverty and the attendant problem of crime escalated, wreaking havoc on the city's working and middle class communities, the backbone of the city's economy. Similar to
(continued on page 4)