

Waco Community Development

“Revitalizing neighborhoods street by street, block by block.”



November 2011

Daily Walks in the Near-North Waco Neighborhood

By: Gabriela Gatlin

On a recent Friday, my grandparents invited me to join them on their evening walk in the neighborhood. Almost two years ago, my grandparents bought a Waco Community Development home, and since they moved into the neighborhood, they have routinely taken one morning and one evening walk of one mile along Morrow and Barron avenues. Walking with my grandparents on that Friday evening, I was pleasantly surprised to meet all the friends they've made along the route. I asked them about their walks, and they shared the following reflections with me.

Why walk in your neighborhood instead of the mall or an exercise track?

Fresh air is very invigorating; getting to know our neighbors is even more invigorating. Just getting to know our neighbors gives us a greater sense of belonging to the community and a greater sense of security. We know that if anything happens to us while walking, we can count on those neighbors to come to our aid.

What are some highlights from your daily walks in the neighborhood?

Picking up trash, greeting occupants of cars that pass by, greeting people in front of their homes, praying for the community. We have met a number of the neighbors, some of whom we know their names, where they work and where they attend church. Occasionally, a neighbor will stop the car and visit with us briefly. Some will come out of their home and greet us or call from a distance.

What are some changes that you've witnessed in the 18 months that you've been walking?

At first, few people returned our greetings, but now practically all drivers return our greetings with a big smile and honk their horn or slow down to respond verbally. Often when we come to a stop at a street, drivers will stop for us, blocking traffic to allow us to cross. We have been able to visit at some length with some of the neighbors as we walk by their homes. The five new houses that have been built on 12th Street are now occupied. These houses and the many others that have been built in the neighborhood are lifting the quality of life in the community and eliminating some of the vices that existed before. At first, there were dogs that barked furiously as we passed. Now, not one of them shows signs of wanting to bark at us. Months ago, one dog on Morrow and her several pups came out several times barking at us furiously. Now, she sleeps in her yard, and when we pass, she doesn't move at all. She just opens her eyes, sees us, and then goes back to sleep. We are the daily walk people just passing by.

CALENDAR

Classes

2011 Financial Literacy

6-8 PM for 6 weeks

Next class series

begins November 3rd

Homebuyer Education II

Next class will begin

November 12th

1-6 PM

Classes are free!

To register call:

(254)235-7358



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The newsletter of Waco Community Development whose mission is to revitalize neighborhoods by promoting housing, community and economic development throughout Waco.

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‘Myopia?’

By: Darrell Abercrombie

What comes to mind when you hear the word ‘myopia?’ For those that have not gone to optometry school, ‘myopia’ is a condition that causes one’s sight to be out of focus, otherwise unclear and uncertain. Eye care professionals correct this defect by prescribing corrective lenses or contact lenses.



Especially with the economy as it is, our financial goals can sometimes present ‘myopia’ for us. Whether your car has a maintenance emergency, your medical bills keep piling up, or there is a decrease in pay at your job, there is always something that hinders us from seeing straight with our finances. I tell everyone that comes to our classes that you must decide what is important to you. When you think about your priorities, what takes first, second or third place?

Belinda, one of our clients, had to prioritize and make some serious decisions regarding moving herself and her two children from an apartment to owning her own home. She had to figure out how much she would need to clear up her credit challenges and estimate her monthly payments for her new home. She figured she would most likely be paying just as much as she was paying for rent. Even though she had her own place, she felt her future was out of focus as long as she had to pay rent. Owning her own home became myopia for her.



Welcome Stephen!

By: Stephen Boyes

Do you remember the first time you saw “the map?” You know, the block-by-block, lot-by-lot breakdown of North Waco real estate covered in push pins and multicolored dots and gold stars? Of course you do. We all remember the first time we saw “the map.” With so much detail and precision, the thing looks like a plan to escape from Alcatraz. You get the sense that the map is really, really important, like it’s tied to some critical mission.



When Mike first showed me the map three years ago, I had two reactions. My first reaction was: “Who on earth has time to make such a thing?” My second reaction was: “I gotta figure out how to work for this organization.” It is, therefore, with great pleasure that I introduce myself as one of Waco Community Development’s new social work interns. My name is Stephen Boyes, I am deeply infatuated with community development, and it seems I’m not the only one. Everyone in this office is both dedicated *and* busy, so I understand I’m here to learn *and* produce something of value. Luckily I’m earning my keep under the tutelage of local community expert Walker Moore. So far he’s kept me very occupied. Who knows? Maybe I’ll even get to make a map...

Two Beautiful Homes Awaiting their families



612 N. 14th Street

- 3 Bedroom
- 2 Bathroom
- 1400 Square feet of living area

702 N. 13th Street

- 4 Bedroom
- 2 1/2 Bathroom
- Energy Star
- Formal Dining Room
- 2100 Square Feet of Living Area
- Stained Concrete Floors
- Kitchen with Breakfast Room
- Two-Car Garage
- Security System
- Tank-less Water Heater



Positive Solutions Being Made

When issues arise, there are two available responses, ignore them or address the problem. J.H. Hines Elementary had a problem. Parents and teachers did not trust each other. Parents and teachers knew it, and they had a decision to make.

As I began organizing the school, I asked over 150 parents and teachers “what do you want to do about this problem?” It was decision time, and they made it abundantly clear that they wanted to fix the problem. They knew that the children’s future rested on parents and teachers trusting each other.

How do you establish trust between parents and teachers? It starts with a one-on-one relational meeting. This is not a parent/teacher conference where teachers talk and parents listen. This is a conversation about the child’s education and an opportunity to move from being “Johnny’s teacher” and “Johnny’s mom” to “Stephanie” and “Holly.”

Many people ask how I get parents to attend the meetings? The answer is simple: treat them the same way the dentist treats me. The dentist knows that if I do not come to my appointment, he does not get paid. With this in mind, he schedules the appointment in advance, sends a reminder postcard, and calls me the night before. J.H. Hines Elementary treated the parents with the same level of respect. The school scheduled the meetings in advance and sent reminder postcards. Following this routine, eight different East Waco organizations made hundreds of phone calls to remind parents about the meetings.

The results were stellar. 314 relational meetings between parents and teachers took place during three weeks in September. Over 65% of the parents attended. Parents and teachers walked away with a greater appreciation for each other. Teachers understood their students more and parents gained confidence in the school.

It is truly amazing what a community can do when it works together. In this case, the lives of J.H. Hines Elementary students were positively impacted because parents and teachers recognized a problem and decided to fix it instead of ignoring it.

By: Walker Moore



Picture taken from WISD website



1624 Colcord Ave.
Waco, TX 76707

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Waco Community Development revitalizes neighborhoods by promoting housing, community and economic development throughout Waco. To build strong neighborhoods, WCD partners with key stakeholders to execute five key programs. Together, we work to RENEW Waco.

Renovate historic and construct new single-family homes.
Equip families to become homeowners through homebuyer education and financial literacy classes.
Neighborhood service projects through community collaboration.
Encourage and support economic development in the neighborhood.
Work with community leaders to strengthen their neighborhood.

The Good Samaritan

By: Mike Stone

“What are you doing with that grass?” said Mrs. Williams to the man that was examining the newly delivered pallet of grass.

“I haven’t seen you around here working and you don’t look like the guy that normally puts the grass down. You don’t need to be looking at their grass. Go on!” she continued. The man heeded her instructions, went back to his truck and left.

This was a great example of how our neighbors are taking care of neighbors. Mrs. Williams lives across the street from a house that we were building in our Near-North Waco neighborhood. The grass was delivered, was not immediately installed and sat in the driveway for a day. When the guy showed up and started looking at the grass, she knew something wasn’t right. She went, took charge of the situation and caused the man to leave. She, then, called a relative that knew who the home was being built for and we were notified of the good Samaritan work that she had done. What a take-charge type of neighbor!

We really love the way that the neighbors have been helping us monitor the construction sites and keeping our homes secure. Most importantly, we love the way that the neighbors model being a good neighbor.



BY THE NUMBERS

Housing:
Homeowners: 163
New Homes: 43
Renovated: 16

Opportunities:
Counseled: 1367
Active: 109

Maintenance:
Volunteers: 5,403
Vol. Hours: 41,233
Lots Mowed: 1,920

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www.WacoCDC.org