

Neighborhoods Are People

by Ralph Simmons

A great deal of confusion has arisen over the rhetoric concerning Lawrence's neighborhoods the last few weeks. According to Webster, a neighborhood can be a geographical place, as well as a community/social network. In Lawrence, the city has created six central city neighborhoods (geographical areas) for the purposes of disbursement of federal Community Development funds.

Operating within these neighborhoods are voluntary associations of neighborhood residents. These voluntary associations are primarily service-oriented, but they also serve social functions, and advise the city regarding issues of concern to their residents. Lawrence also has several other distinct geographical neighborhoods which do not receive Community Development money, and which do not have formally organized voluntary associations.

The status of Lawrence's central city neighborhoods surfaced when the Lawrence Journal-World asked the thirteen pre-primary city commission candidates, "Has the city directed too much attention to the central city neighborhoods to the detriment of outlying areas?" The tone of the question made it clear that the newspaper was trying to create a conflict—central city neighborhoods versus the rest of Lawrence. None of the six primary winners bit the bait. All said every part of the city deserves equal attention.

After the primary, something happened to cause the fifth- and sixth-place candidates to change their minds. That something may have been the strong first- and third-place finishes by Nancy Shontz and Tom Gleason, largely based on the strength of their showing in central city precincts. In withdrawing from the city commission race and throwing his support to Bob Schumm, Mike Amyx said, "I feel there are two candidates being supported by the neighborhood groups, that if elected could be a detriment to the city of Lawrence." Schumm said that the campaign could be interpreted as pitting the interests of the neighborhoods against the city as a whole.

Now it was in the open. Subtle innuendo in the Journal-World and on KLWN gave way to overt editorializing. The warnings from the media, Don Binns, the Homebuilders Association, the labor unions and some of the candidates against "special interests" were as ironic as they were unmistakable. The people in power were scared, and they were willing to divide the town by pandering to fears they hoped to foster—if that's what it took to keep control.

For their part, none of the six organized neighborhood associations endorsed any candidate. All six candidates had open public support among the active members of the neighborhood associations, as evidenced by the fact that all six candidates had signs in the yards of members of the East Lawrence Improvement Association, supposedly one of the stronger of the "empires." The situation was the same in other central city neighborhoods.

The issue of neighborhoods in city politics is not a new one in Lawrence. In 1975, Lawrence voters elected three "pro-neighborhood" commissioners: Marnie Argersinger, Don Binns and Carl Mibeck. After Mibeck's term expired, "neighborhood" commissioners Binns and Argersinger voted against using the Hobbs family bequest for a park in East Lawrence, despite the fact that the family had specified that the park was to be in East Lawrence. Argersinger insulted scores of East Lawrence residents who appeared at the commission meeting, calling them a "different breed" from the rest of the city. Meanwhile, the three "business" commissioners voted to build the park in the neighborhood. Enough said about the history of "neighborhood" commissioners.

In 1977, residents of every central city precinct voted to double their own water rates so a new water treatment plant could be built. This plant was constructed to facilitate the developing areas at the west end of town. Ironically, residents of the older neighborhoods, many of whom have owned the same house and paid taxes for decades, found deaf ears at City Hall when they recently complained of rusty water.

Last summer, voters in every central city neighborhood except North Lawrence voted to build a new fire station to serve the southwest part of Lawrence. Despite the fact that North Lawrence has never had a fire station of its own, the measure failed there by only thirteen votes.

What was most distressing about this rhetoric of the neighborhoods versus the city, or creating a "city within a city" is that it flew squarely in the face of the facts. It was an insult to the dignity of the people who by choice or necessity happen to live in the older part of town, and an insult to the intelligence of the people who live in the newer part of town.

We all live in neighborhoods, therefore, we all share similar concerns. We want our streets to be safe and clean, we want our water to be clean and our water pressure to be adequate. We want open green spaces, convenient shopping and adequate police and fire protection.

Parents of children attending New York School want to insure the safety of their children walking to school just as much as the parents of children who walk to Deerfield School. The people in Pinckney, just like the people near Naismith Valley do not want their basements to flood when it rains hard. Nobody wants an obnoxious tavern on their block.

If any part of Lawrence has basic needs which are not being met, it is a blight on the whole community. Central city residents have voted to increase their own taxes to provide services to newer areas which were developed without proper planning, and lacked those services. Nobody in the central city wants special favors or control of the town; they just want a fair shake from their government, the same as everyone else.



STRETCH FOR IT, SUE

Lawrence City Commissioner Tom Gleason and Sue Davis are two of more than a couple dozen people who participated in the Oread Neighborhood Spring Clean-up on Saturday, April 25. The volunteers collected brush piles, construction debris, old mattresses and other miscellaneous junk placed near the alleys by Oread residents and property owners. After the trucks made several runs to the city landfill, Oread's alleys and streets took on a new look.

The volunteer work force was fed a well deserved lunch, including black beans prepared by Paula Whicker with curry rice made by Mayor Marci Francisco. The one thing that the Oread Neighborhood failed to provide for its volunteer workers on that hot Saturday was beer. That is one oversight which will not be duplicated by the East Lawrence Improvement Association. ELIA plans to have beer for the dozen or so volunteers expected to work the East Lawrence Spring Clean-up on the Saturdays of May 9 and 16.

The area of East Lawrence north of 11th St. is slated for the Clean-up on the 9th, the area south of 11th St. on the 16th. May 30 is the scheduled make-up day in case it rains on either of the earlier Saturdays. Neighborhood residents are asked to place their brush or bulky items near the alleys to be picked up on the clean-up day. ELIA will provide coffee and doughnuts to volunteers in the morning before the work begins, and lunch after the work is over.

The Pinckney Neighborhood Association plans their clean-up in June.

Photo by Jolene Babyak. Text by Barry Shalinsky

843-9616 HOME 843-4364

BIG G'S ANTIQUES
444 LOGUST

OPEN 12-5
EVERY DAY

OLD GUNS
BRASS &
COPPER

ART GFELLER
PROP.

WHOLESALE & RETAIL

PRIMITIVES

FURNITURE

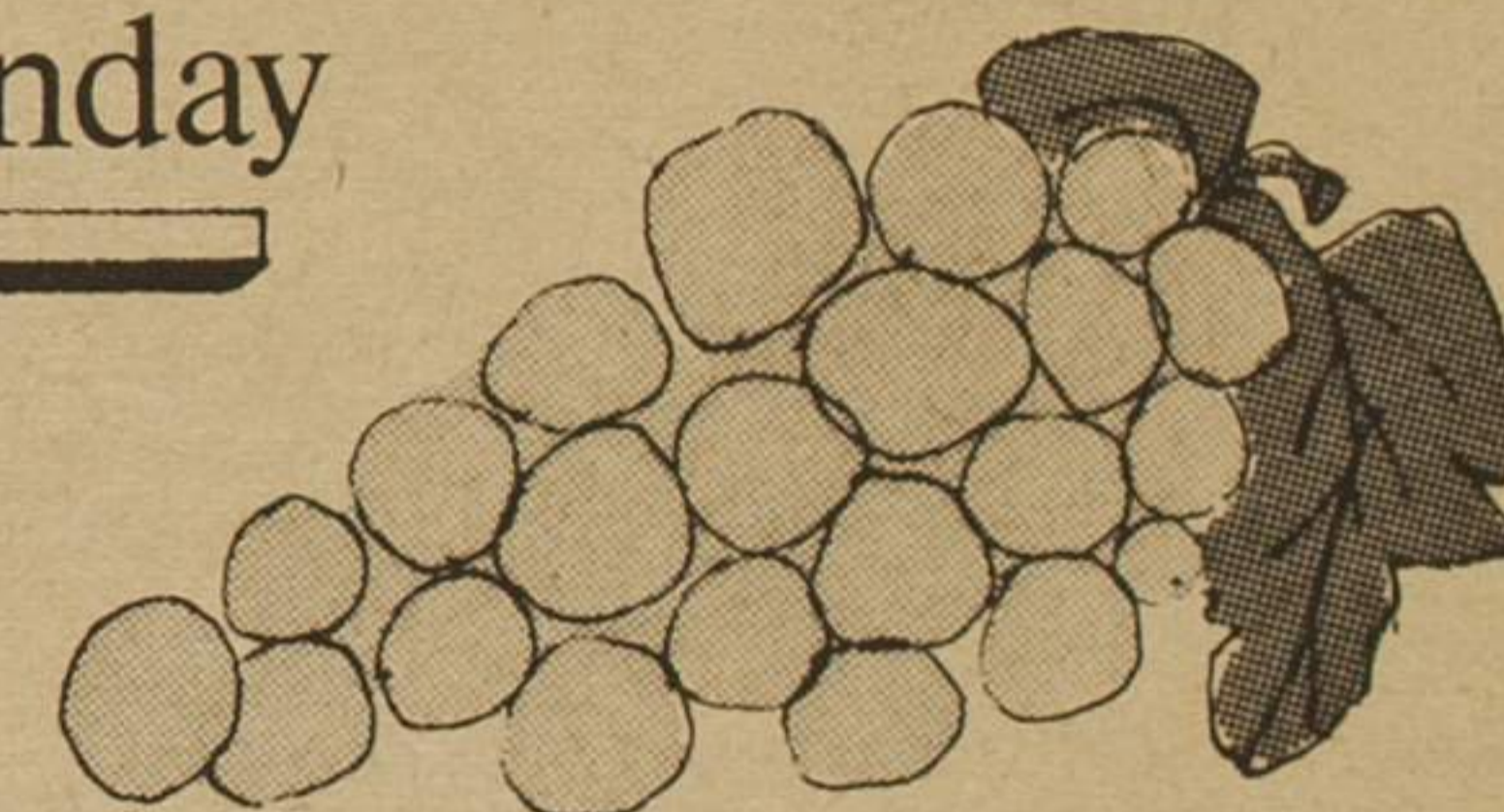
COLLECTIBLES

BOB'S FIFTH PLACE

Servicing the community every day

Open Wednesday - Monday

Closed Tuesdays



with a new private club upstairs

THE SOUR GRAPE ROOM

PRAIRIE MUSIC

SALES RENTALS

LESSONS & REPAIRS

737 New Hamp. 841-0817

FIDDLES

GUITARS

BANJOS

Coins-Gold-Silver

Buy—Sell—Trade

90% Silver (per \$1 face)	Buy	Sell
	8.50	10.00
Silver Dollars ea.	12.00	13.50
Sterling oz.	8.00	11.00
10k Gold gram	4.00	5.50
14k Gold gram	5.70	7.00
Dental Gold gram	6.65	9.00

Prices Adjusted Daily. All prices based on \$12.00/oz. Silver, and \$525.00/oz. Gold spot prices. Slightly smaller margins on larger quantities. Call or Drop By.

16 East 8th
842-8001

Great Plains Numismatic Services