

AABRA Update!

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John Westrum calls Brewerytown “slum”

A Temple University conference reveals that a network of anti-community, pro-gentrification forces is allied against the long-time residents of North Philadelphia, including those of Brewerytown. John Westrum, developer of 31st & Thompson condos, leads the pack. Residents react strongly.

“I don’t want to hear anything more about gentrification. I prefer to use the term unslumming.”

-- John Westrum, at Temple University’s
Social Entrepreneurship Conference

When developer John Westrum made these controversial remarks, he was a featured guest of Temple’s Fox School of Business and was surrounded by admiring professors from Temple and the University of Pennsylvania, as well as business leaders. The conference theme was “Investing in Urban Communities: Balancing Growth & Inclusion.” Event ads encouraged attendees to “join a distinguished panel for an interactive session.” Unfortunately, while developers were welcomed, even celebrated, community members and activists were prevented from voicing concerns or asking questions.



Brewerytown before Westrum, May 2004
29th St., Girard Ave., Cecil B. Moore. Is this a “slum?”

AABRA representatives attending this gathering observed a country club atmosphere, where developers and academicians felt comfortable mocking and insulting the poor, African-Americans, activists and community sensibilities. In the end, this “interactive” session turned out to be little more than a bitter, anti-community, self-congratulatory performance, where nothing, save an unintended clarion call, was accomplished.

The indifference of Temple and Penn to eminent domain abuse in North and West Philadelphia; the growth of student housing at the expense of long-time poverty-stricken neighbors; faculty participation in corrupt city administrations and as consultants

to large developers and law firms are well-known tragedies. What was so stark about the conference was the naked arrogance of the pro-gentrification participants and the matter-of-fact contempt for residents and their civil liberties.

“Unslumming” is clearly a derogatory term aimed at Brewerytown and other communities in which Westrum has built his homes. Surely the people of Brewerytown know that they have a troubled community, but how many of them believe that they live in a slum?

We asked several residents to comment on whether they think of Brewerytown as a slum.

*Continued on page 3, please see **Gentrification Conference***

New project threatens 27th St.

When Pennrose and Westrum bypassed community opposition to build expensive housing along 31st Street, the long-time residents saw a direct challenge to their opportunity to stay in an affordable community. Now, new developers are poised to build \$250,000.00 homes at 1229 N. 27th St. (27th & Stiles). This is being viewed as a far greater challenge because 31st Street is on the sparsely populated boundary of the community, while 27th is in the heart of Brewerytown.



Brewerytown: Westrum & 27 Street Projects. Source: Mapquest

A zoning hearing on the proposal is scheduled for:

*** Wednesday, July 18th, at 2:00 PM**

*** 1515 Arch Street, 18th floor**

AABRA has held meetings with the developers to negotiate a plan to lessen or eliminate the gentrification and displacement that would certainly arise from the new homes. However, the differences appear too great to overcome.

The community proposes to fund community preservation programs from unit sales and condo fees, thereby creating a meaningful, sustainable and tax-deductible revenue base to be replicated by future developments. The 27th Street developers believe that even modest per unit contributions would be too burdensome, hurt profits, raise sales prices and harm marketability. They prefer a small one-time donation already rejected as insultingly inadequate by the community.

Neighbors are promising a long legal fight and massive civil disobedience to ensure that the project, in its current form, is never completed. We encourage everyone who cares about preserving affordability in Philadelphia to attend the hearing on Wed., July 18th at 2 PM. We hope to see you there!

Youth basketball tournament begins

There is still time to register for the 1st Annual Youth Basketball Tournament, which will begin on Friday, July 27, 2007. Neighborhood rap artist G Luv, of Get Money

Productions, is organizing the event. He explains: "The tournament will be played on 3 weekends. The first two weekends will be used to determine team rankings. The last will be to crown a champion."

There will be eight teams, each with eight players and one coach. Registration is only \$80 per team and includes the cost of team T-shirts and fees for referees. Please call all G Luv at (267) 342-3436 to participate.

New neighbors fight Oldies Nights

Nookie Williams, 59-year resident of Brewerytown, was astonished to see Liquor Control Board officers attempting to stop his Oldies Night last Sunday, July 8th.

Then, he learned that some of Westrum's new owners near 31st & Master have been working with the state police to dig up whatever they could to cancel his popular events, which occur every 2nd and 4th Sunday at the Songhai City Cultural Center.

FREE! July 22, 2007!



enjoy the music.

enjoy the food.

support your neighborhood.

all for free ...

We're here to stay!

"This is something positive we do for the 40+ crowd and yet these people want to send us packing?" he asked. "Sorry, but we don't roll that way. They can try their underhanded tricks, like making false reports to the LCB, having powerful allies bend some rules to get a few undercover officers down here. But, we always obey the law and we will always be here to support our wonderful community. As a matter of fact, we'll be here on July 22nd throwing a party for long-time residents of Brewerytown. We'll even invite our not so friendly new neighbors. Folks, we're here to stay."

Philadelphia Police sources indicate that they have never received any complaints about Oldies Nights or observed any problematic behavior outside the facility. You can show your support for the hard-working people of this historic, overwhelmingly African-American community by attending that free celebration on July 22nd from 4 - 9 PM.

Gentrification Conference (cont'd)

Helen Deloris, a resident of the same Brewerytown home since 1953, offered "This neighborhood is no slum! This is a good neighborhood and I enjoy living here. The state Rep lives right across the street, two preachers live on the corner. And, if it was so bad, why would so many people want to move here?"

Resident *Ella Handsome* said "There are unsightly areas. But, the majority of the people are homeowners who maintain their properties, beautify the area, bring up the neighborhood. We have our share of problems, but I don't live in anyone's slum."

Long-time resident *Alonzo Brewington* said "Brewerytown is not a slum. If it's a slum, why are upper-income people moving to my block? Why are homes selling for \$250,000? Think."

Another resident, who asked to remain anonymous, offered "Those crazy little houses that Westrum built on 31st look like a high-priced slum to me. Why would anyone want to spend \$300,000 to live next to railroad tracks? Those fools bought into Westrum's slum -- that's the only slum around here."

An activist quipped "If this is a slum, is Westrum a slumlord?"

Perhaps Westrum's suburban background makes it difficult for him to differentiate between a functioning, courageous African-American community and a vile, base slum. In any event, he has indicated a profound disrespect for Brewerytown residents and they are returning the favor.

Also at Temple's conference, Jeremy Nowak, a Wharton professor who runs the Reinvestment Fund, excitedly told the audience that "Those of you who are afraid of rampant gentrification can relax. The city is experiencing a net increase in poor, so you don't have to worry." Besides the insensitivity and flippancy of his remarks, they reveal that Nowak's research and reasoning capabilities are inadequate. In fact, the newly added poor are not moving to the neighborhoods being gentrified. After all, those areas are now priced out of their reach!

Gentrification is going full steam ahead – in geographically desirable neighborhoods – precisely because Nowak's friends,

like John Westrum, continue to build market-rate housing in poor communities and a corrupt city government will go so far as to change the zoning code to ensure that community members lose their right to contest those developments (see ordinances 060901 and 060902).

After the conference, we asked Fox Business School Dean M. Moshe Porat why he had not invited *even one* long-time resident or community activist to sit on the discussion panel. He offered, with a straight face, "It was a scheduling issue." He then, only reluctantly, accepted our report that described many of Westrum Development's activities in Brewerytown over the last five years and why we have opposed them.

In fact, we distributed approximately 100 such summaries of Westrum's anti-community activities and the support they have obtained from city officials.

Unfortunately, Temple and Penn professors, business leaders and their entourages either refused to accept the documentation or, like Dean Porat, grudgingly received it. And, to date, not one of these well-connected individuals has sent any comments to AABRA. Discussion of pro-gentrification activities of Westrum, Nowak and others appears to be off-limits for university professors.

***"If this is a slum,
is Westrum a slumlord?"***

That non-discussion philosophy extends to the student publication, *Temple News*. We sent an editorial to that newspaper, calling upon the Temple community to monitor the activities of the University, especially the Business School, as they relate to developing the areas near campus. Unfortunately, though promised repeatedly by several *Temple News* staff members, the editorial never ran. It would seem that Temple's young journalists have learned to bow to corporate interests well in advance of receiving corporate salaries.

Important Phone Numbers

<u>Streets Department</u> (cleaning, recycling, reporting illegal dumping, traffic/street lights)	<u>215-685-9010/6749</u>
<u>Report animal bites, strays</u>	<u>215-686-5560</u>
<u>Free child car seats (\$10 deposit)</u>	<u>215-685-7485</u>
<u>Free/low-cost health insurance</u>	<u>800-464-5437</u>
<u>Drug abuse & mental health help</u>	<u>888-545-2600</u>
<u>Help mentally ill relatives</u>	<u>800-950-6264</u>
<u>Mental health information packets</u>	<u>215-599-5176</u>

Classifieds

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Soul Food Catering. Mouth-watering fish, chicken, beef, greens & vegetarian dishes. Great prices. Butter's Soul Food To Go! , 2821 W. Girard Avenue. 215-235-4724	
Color Copies. 49 cents special! B&W copies–10 cents! Restrictions apply. Limited time only. 215-769-3333	

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1st Annual

Youth Basketball Tournament

sponsored by



The African-American Business & Residents Association (AABRA)

with Mellon Green Realty

Ladies and gentlemen, boy's and girl's, get ready for Philly's biggest three-week youth tournament ever put together! 8 teams. Each team will have 8 players & 1 coach.

Ranking Weeks



Week 1 and Week 2 are the ranking weeks. This means that each team will be evaluated and numbered from 1 (best team) to 8 (rookie team). Each team will get a chance to play 4 games before eliminations begin.

The Elimination Rounds

This is the 3rd and final week. Each team will be placed in a bracket for single-elimination games. (Team #1 plays #8, #2 vs. #7, etc. Winners move to next round.)

Championship Games

On the final Sunday, the two surviving teams will receive Championship Game T-shirts and play a best of 3 series. There will be a half-hour break between each game. The slogan for Sunday's Championship Games is **Go Hard or Go Home**. The winning team will receive trophies; the best player of that series will be rewarded with the MVP trophy.

Registration Fee: \$80 per team

Date Begins: July 2nd, 2007. 1st game starts @5:30pm

Place: Lemon Hill, 33rd Poplar Street

Contact Info: Gary (267) 342-3436 or Al (215) 763-3333



**LET
THE GAMES
BEGIN!**

