# City of Westminster

NEWS AND NOTES

*Volume Two, Issue 1a*

## Letter from the Mayor

**Dear Residents:**

As we ring in 2010, we need to reflect on the events and activities of the past year. While events have recently been overshadowed with the "gloom and doom" of budget cuts and reductions, we have to recognize that 2009 has been a year of substantial progress for our City.

**Our continuing** struggle with water issues have been alleviated by the opening of our new **Cranberry Water Treatment Plant**, one of the most technologically-advanced plants in the country, and the completion of the **Medford Quarry Pipeline** to provide substantial relief during the time of drought. Fortunately, this year also produced such an adequate rainfall that **Code Yellow** status was not declared. The **Roops Mill well** came on line and the application for the **Gesell well** was completed. The City completed the new **Water Resources Element** in the Comprehensive Plan, and also a joint County/Municipal Water Resources Element, providing a plan for water and sewer capacity over the next decade. The City was also awarded $800,000 in **Economic Stimulus funding** to replace all water meters in our system with computerized read capability. The City filed a joint application with Carroll County for $5M for a pipeline to **Union Mills** which has not yet been funded.

To help celebrate the dedication of these new capital improvements to our water system, Governor Martin O'Malley proclaimed **Westminster Capital for a Day** and brought the entire executive cabinet to spend the day in Westminster. The Deputy Secretary of the Maryland Department of the Environment dedicated the new water treatment plant; the Secretary of the Department of the Housing and Community Development toured the Union Street/Pennsylvania Avenue neighborhood, and the Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources dedicated King Park. The Governor toured Main Street, stopping to visit with business owners and lunching at Guillinova. The afternoon concluded with a Cabinet Meeting at McDaniel College. This was a great opportunity to showcase the good things we are accomplishing in Westminster.

The **King Park** project was completed this year—the City's first entirely handicap-accessible playground. This Park was a joint project with Project Open Space funding of $48,215 and contributions from Robin Ford, developer, totaling $115,000. Construction of the new **Community Building** in City Park began this year, and a **Community Parks and Playground grant** for $50,000 was received to provide ADA compliant improvements to all of our City Parks.

And for parents and youngsters, the new **Skateboard Park** was constructed and opened. This joint project with the Carroll County Career and Technology Center received the **Award of Excellence** from the Maryland Municipal League at the June Conference. This park is in use during daylight hours every day of the week.

The Tri-Street Neighborhood Task Force reconvened and reviewed progress in that neighborhood: Sale of a renovated property at **18A Union Street**, completion of the **Maple Street** residential façade improvement program, and construction of the Union Street/Pennsylvania Avenue **Community Legacy Streetscape** project. The capstone of the revitalization of this neighborhood will be the building of nine new, affordable townhomes by **Episcopal Housing Corporation**, using a major Community Development Block Grant and HOME funds from the Department of Housing and Community Development.

In other areas, we received a $25,000 **recycling grant** which as used to recycle electronic waste, and **energy conservation funding** to equip our buildings with energy-saving lights, etc. The first **red light cameras** were installed on Route 140 and Nursery Road, and new signs directing tourists to sites of interest in Westminster were approved.

The City celebrated the holiday season with the first annual Miracle on Main Street electric parade. Thousands watched as 50 electric floats and 30 other marching bands, animal acts, antique vehicles and walkers turned Main Street into a spectacular holiday celebration. Followed by the Christmas tree lighting and Santa's Treat, it was a fitting finale to a year filled with many encouraging and positive activities and projects.

The President and members of the Common Council join me and City staff in wishing you and yours a Happy New Year!

*Kevin Utz*
Mayor

# Water Conservation Tips

Everyone should be aware by now that water is a precious and limited resource in Maryland. But, not everyone is aware of what they can do to conserve and help ensure the availability of this resource. Below are some simple actions you can take to do your part (and save a little $$ on your water bill).

| Conservation Measure | Approx cost | Water saved | Annual Savings | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | gpd/household | City | County |
| Replace old(>3gpf) toilet with a HE model (1.3 gpf) | $200 | 30 | $42 | $55 |
| Fix leaky toilet | $20 | 200 | $275 | $365 |
| Install low-flow showerhead (1.5gpm) | $10 | 13 | $18 | $24 |
| Install faucet aerators | $10 | 12 | $17 | $22 |
| Install Energy Star clothes washer | $400 | 100/week | $22 | $26 |
| Conservation Landscaping | $25 | 25 | $35 | $45 |

*The annual savings estimates are based on water usage charges for the City's water system customers as of July 1, 2009, and represent consumption similar to the national average for each measure.*

***To learn more about conserving water inside the home, visit***
**www.epa.gov/watersense *and* www.energystar.gov**

Since approximately 30% of potable water is used outside the home for irrigation, cleaning, and pool filling; here are some tips to conserve when you're outside:

**Plan your landscape-** assess light, water, and drainage conditions for all planting areas on your property. Draw a diagram so you always know what plant characteristics are required.

**Select and Group Plants Appropriately-** Choose plants best suited for the conditions where they are to be planted. Choose drought tolerant and native plants when possible.

**Limit turf areas-** turf is the most inefficient type of landscape treatment available. It requires watering, mowing, weeding, and fertilizing that other treatments do not. Consider planting beds with paths, pervious hardscapes, or vegetable gardens; only using turf where necessary.

**Improve the soil-** soils having proper nutrient and organic matter levels will grow healthier plants with less watering and work.

**Mulch-** for most planting beds, adding 2" of organic mulch in the spring will lower the soil temperature, slow evaporation, and add organic material to the soil.

**Irrigate Efficiently-** don't water between 9am and 7pm, deliver water to the soil around the plant, and water thoroughly to develop deep root systems. Also, don't waste water on sidewalks and driveways -they don't need it.

**Maintain the landscape-** ongoing maintenance will keep plants healthy and reduce their needs.

***To learn more about conserving water in the landscape, visit***
**www.wateruseitwisely.com**
**www.denverwater.org/Conservation**
**www.hgic.umd.edu**

## News for TreeHuggers

In the last edition of the city newsletter you read about the City's commitment to urban trees through participation in the Tree City program. In this edition, the City of Westminster would like to further emphasize these values in terms that are easy to understand.

The benefits of a tree are normally calculated in five areas:

**Stormwater:** A mature tree holds about 30% of the rain that falls on its canopy, and stores another 30% in its root system. This is water that doesn't make it to paved surfaces where it carries pollutants into streams. This also helps avoid soil erosion in less developed areas.

**Property Value:** Studies are showing that properties with ample mature trees are valued 10-15% higher than those without trees in comparable settings. In residential settings, additional value is added by the traffic calming effect of street trees and increased walkability.

**Energy:** Using deciduous trees to shade the south and east sides, and evergreens to block winter winds on the north side of your home can reduce energy consumption by 15-30%. Trees that shade paved surfaces can lower city temperatures by 3-5 degrees, resulting in lower cooling costs and longer lifespan for asphalt surfaces.

**Air Quality:** Trees absorb gases like $CO_2$, $NO_2$, $SO_2$, and VOCs. These gases have shown to be harmful to people and the environment in large quantities. Trees also intercept particulates in the air, and lower air temperature reducing ground-level ozone.

**$CO_2$:** Trees sequester $CO_2$ from the air and contribute to reduced $CO_2$ release from energy production. It takes 20 mature, average-sized trees to offset the $CO_2$ produced by one car driving 12,000 miles per year. Trees next to streets absorb up to 9 times more $CO_2$ than trees over 50ft from the roadway.

Westminster has nearly 1,100 trees lining city streets and in other public areas. That's enough to intercept 1.8 million gallons of rainwater, avoid 85,000 KwH of electricity generation, and sequester 175 tons of carbon. These trees also have the potential to add $86,200 worth of value to adjacent properties.
So, as the old saying goes… "*the best time to plant a tree is twenty years ago, the second best time is today.*"

## Save Energy During the Winter Months

As winter sets in and cold winds howl around our historic streets and neighborhoods, thoughts turn to the upcoming holidays, anticipation of our first snowstorm, and the dreaded winter heating bills. If you live or work in one of the more than 1400 Historic buildings in our town, you may be reading his article next to an old wooden window, or a cast-iron radiator, sitting between un-insulated plaster walls, or behind an old, paneled hardwood front door. You're probably thinking about all the warm air escaping through all the cracks and crannies in those old features, and how you'll need to replace them to keep your house warm this winter.

If you're in this situation, the Westminster Historic District Commission urges you to peruse the National Trust for Historic Preservation's (NTHP) new web resource for winterizing historic structures: http://www.preservationnation.org/issues/weatherization/.

The agency's goal is to promote the preservation of historic buildings and their key features by presenting research and best practices related to renovating old buildings to handle the extreme of winter weather. You may be surprised to find that your old home or office building has built-in features that were intended to increase its performance. Many of the recommended upgrades found on this site are eligible for rebates from your energy supplier, and tax credits from the federal government.

So preserve your old home, reduce your heating and cooling costs, and reduce your carbon footprint by learning how to work with your old building to increase it's performance.

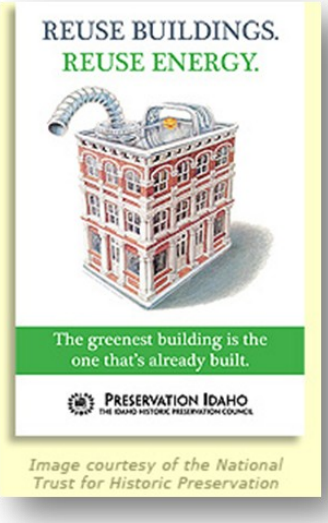


Image courtesy of the National Trust for Historic Preservation

# Street Tree FAQs

Below are some of the most frequently asked questions about the rules and regulations for street trees in Westminster. Hopefully, this will clear up some of your questions:

**Who do the street trees belong to?** The best way to think of it is that they belong to the residents of the City. They are in a public right-of-way, so technically "the public" has access to them. In many cases the City actually owns the right-of way, so that makes the road and sidewalk public property.

**Who takes care of them?** The adjacent property owner is responsible for trimming the trees between their property and the road (section 139-7 of the City code). On some main roads, City crews or the City's tree care contractor will periodically assess and perform work of the trees. This does not relieve the responsibility of the adjacent property owner, it just provides additional oversight on some key streets.

**Can I cut down a street tree?** You can contract a licensed Roadside Tree Expert to remove a street tree in front of your property if: (1) The tree poses a hazard to property, public safety or health; (2) the tree is deteriorated or substantially damaged; (3) removal will improve the aesthetic appearance of the right-of-way. These are the only reasons for which Maryland Department of Natural Resources will approve a permit for street tree removal.

**Permit? When is one required, and how do I get it?** You need a permit from Maryland Department of Natural Resources to plant, prune, remove, root prune, or treat any street tree. This is to help ensure that tree work is done by those with proper training, and that the work will not create circumstances that are detrimental to other people, property, or other trees. A permit application can be obtained at www.dnr.maryland.gov/forests/programapps/newrtlaw.asp, by contacting our local DNR office at (410)848-9290, or the City Department of Planning at 410-848-9000.

**The tree roots are ruining my sidewalk! What should I do?** Tree roots can make some sidewalks look more like skateboard parks. Ideally, sidewalks are planned and installed to minimize the risk of tree root damage, but in many older neighborhoods, the problem is already there, and now the property owner has a problem to fix. City code requires that the sidewalk remain clear, passable, and maintained to City specs. When it comes time to fix the sidewalk, be sure to consult an Arborist to discuss ways to fix your sidewalk without damaging the trees, while taking precautions to avoid reoccurrence.

**Branches from my street tree are hitting my house- what should I do?** Contact a licensed tree expert to prune the offending branches. A list of licensed experts can be found at: www.dnr.state.md.us/forests/programapps/newtreeexpert.asp

**I want to get more trees in my neighborhood- where do I start?** Connect with the City Tree Commission through the City Arborist or Planning Department. The Commission can recommend programs and resources, or may be interested in adding your neighborhood as a project in the near future.

I would like to learn more about trees and urban forestry-where should I look? Check out the sites listed below, or the Tree Commission's page: http://www.westminstermd.gov/citygov/citygov_tree.html.

**If you still have a question, feel free to contact the Department of Planning at 410-848-9000, or the City Arborist's office at 410-848-9077.**

# Carroll Arts Center Events: January into February 2010

carroll county arts council

**Friday, January 15, 8pm:** *FLICC Presents* "Satin Rouge" 2002, *not rated, 100min*. The mysterious, yet traditional art of belly dancing takes center stage in this uplifting film. After the death of her husband, Lilia's life revolves around her teenage daughter, Salma. After initial hesitation, Lilia learns the art of belly dancing. French and Arabic with English subtitles. Tickets are $5 and $6.

**January 14 through March 16:** *"Unbuntu" exhibit on display. Ubuntu* is of South African origin for "I in You and You in Me." This thought-provoking phrase is the inspiration behind this exhibit. *Ubuntu* will feature a variety of talented artists who grew up in other nations and now make their home in Maryland. Their art is reflective of a combination of traditional styles and world views from their birth nations, combined with the Western aesthetic they encountered here. Admission is free. The public is invited to meet the artists at a community reception on Thursday, January 14 from 5:30 to 7:30pm; complimentary wine and hors d'oeuvres will be served.

**Monday, January 18:** *Martin Luther King Day Movies*. Free admission, courtesy of Carroll Community College. "Sounder" 1972, Rated G, 105 mins, The Morgans are a loving and strong family of black sharecroppers in Louisiana in 1933 who face a serious crisis when the husband and father is convicted of a petty crime and sent to a prison camp. "A Raisin in the Sun" 2007, Rated PG, 131 mins. This made-for-TV version of Lorraine Hansberry's powerful play stars Phylicia Rashad and Sean Combs. It tells the tale of a black family's struggles to deal with poverty, racism, and inner conflict as they strive for a better life after moving to Chicago's South Side in the 1950s.

**Saturday, January 23, 7pm:** *Iron Ridge Bluegrass returns to the Carroll Arts Center!* Due to popular demand, the high-energy, traditional bluegrass band, Iron Ridge, will perform a live concert at the Carroll Arts Center. Their toe-tapping, hand-clapping music has infections rhythms and natural harmonies. They play a variety of traditional county and gospel favorites, and have won numerous awards, including the coveted top award at the Fiddler's Convention. Tickets for the concert are $12 to $14. Snow date for the concert is Sunday, January 24 at 7pm.

**Saturday, February 13, 7:30pm:** *Blue Moon Big Band.* Treat your valentine to an evening of jump, jive and jazz music! This talented 19-member group plays the classic sounds of the 30s, 40s, and 50s with authentic style and elegance. They were recently featured in the major motion picture "My One and Only." Complimentary hors d'oeuvres will be served at intermission, wine, beer and soda will be available for sale. Tickets are $15 and $20. Snow date for the concert is February 21st.

***For more information on any of these events, contact the Carroll Arts Center at 410-848-7272 or visit www.CarrollArtsCouncil.org***

# 7th Annual Foreign Film Festival

Fridays in February at 8pm, shown with English subtitles, sponsored by McDaniel College. Admission is $5-6 or you can purchase a series pass for $20-25.

**February 5th:** *Departures*, 2008, PG-13, 130 mins, Japanese. An out of work cellist finds himself working as a "encoffineer," a funeral professional who prepares bodies for burial and entry into the next life. He begins to perfect the art of "Nokanshi," acting as a gentle gatekeeper between life and death, between the departed and the family of the departed. A profound and sometimes comical journey with death as well as life.

**February 12th:** *La vie en Rose*, 2007, PG-13, 140 mins, French. An award winning biopic illuminating the extraordinary life of singer Edith Piaf. Marion Cotillard performs an uncanny portrayal of this complex cabaret performer hailed as France's most popular performer.

**February 19th:** *Lemon Tree*, 2007, PG, 106 mins, Arabic/Hebrew/French. A unique insight into the ongoing struggles of the Middle East as seen through the eyes of a Palestinian widow who has to stand up against her new neighbor, the Israeli Defense Minister, when he issues orders to uproot her beloved lemon trees that he believes pose a security threat.

**February 26th:** *The Way Home*, 2002, PG, 80 mins, Korean. Seven-year-old Sang-woo is left with his grandmother in a remote village while his mother looks for work. He lashes out in anger and tantrums, perceiving that he has been abandoned. Eventually the mother returns for him, but by then he has been transformed by his grandmother's boundless patience and devotion. He learns to embrace empathy and humility.

## ONE FREE FILM TICKET

With the purchase of one ticket at regular price

**Present this coupon at the Box Office**

# Recreation & Parks Events February 2010

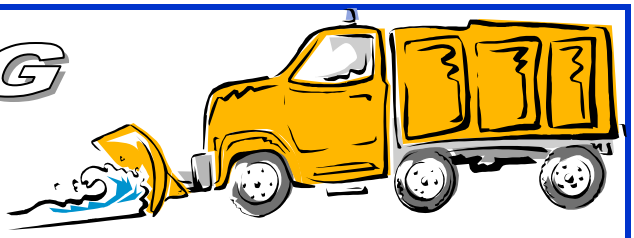
**Friday, February 12th:** *Princess Party, 9:30-10:45am*
Come celebrate your favorite storybook royalty in a day fit for a little Princess! Come dressed in your favorite princess costume. Have an enchanted time of crafts, games, stories and snacks. Program for ages 3-5 years and the cost is $15 per child. Program is held at the Longwell Municipal Center. Please register by February 5th. PRE REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED! Space is limited so register today!

**Friday, February 19th:** *Barnyard Hoedown, 9:30-10:45am*
Dress in your favorite flannel and overalls and come on down for our Barnyard Hoedown! Have a boot-stompin' good time filled with crafts, games, stories and a snack! Program for ages 3-5 years and the cost is $15 per child. Program is held at the Longwell Municipal Center. Please register by February 12th. PRE REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED! Space is limited so register today!

## AMERICAN RED CROSS BLOOD DRIVE

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 23rd**
**Westminster Family Fitness Center 2-6pm**
**Call 410.751.5501 for an appointment**

# SNOW PLOWING 101



The City of Westminster is committed to providing safe vehicular and pedestrian traffic under all conditions. The following information is provided to answer questions about our snow removal operations.

**How many miles of road need to be cleared in the City?** 62.002 miles.

**Are there any snow emergency routes within the City limits?** No.

**Once snow begins to fall, how long does it take the Street Department to begin work?** Two salt/plow trucks are on the streets within one hour of notification and ten salt/plow trucks are on the streets within two hours of notification.

**How long does it take to salt the streets?** Two hours.

**How much salt does it take to clear City streets?** 50-100 tons per trip.

**How much salt is used for a 3 inch snowfall and what is the average cost?** 150-300 tons. This year salt is $60.00 a ton, so material cost is between $9,000.00 - $18,000.00. Payroll cost is about $400.00 per regular hour and $600.00 per overtime hour. Total cost is between $15,000.00 to $24,000.00 for a 10-hour period.

**How much salt did we use last year at what cost?** Last year 1,158.5 tons of salt was used at $75.60 a ton, and the cost was $87,582.60.

**When does the Street Department begin plowing?** When the accumulation reaches 2.0 to 2.5 inches.

**How long does it take for plowing operations?** It takes 10 salt/plow trucks and 10 additional trucks approximately four to five hours to remove every three inches of snow.

**How fast does a snow plow travel?** 5-7 miles per hour is the average speed of a snow plow which limits damage and keeps the snow off the sidewalk.

**In what order are the streets plowed?** Main collector roads are addressed first, with special attention to steep hills and difficult intersections. These main roads are Bennett Ave, Bond St, N/S Center St, Colonial Ave S, Cranberry Rd, Distillery Dr, Emerald Hill Ln, Englar Rd, E/W Green St, John St, Luther Dr, E/W Main St, Malcom Dr, Pennsylvania Ave, Royer Rd, Tahoma Farm Rd, Timber Ridge Dr, Uniontown Rd, Washington Rd, and WMC Dr. Side streets are next and then dead end streets. The main roads must be cleared even if it means the side streets remain unplowed. Parking lots are cleared after all the streets are finished.

**Does the amount of snowfall impact this order?** Yes. Once 8-10 inches of snow has fallen, some alleys may not be cleared until the event is over. After 15 inches of snow, the City will concentrate on keeping two-lane traffic on all main roads and one-lane traffic in all developments, while leaving some alleys unclear until the end of the event. The Utilities, Water and Waste Water Departments provide vehicles and drivers to assist the Streets Department during heavy snowfalls.

**What do I do if my driveway is blocked because of plowed snow?** All snow plows angle the same way—to the driver's right—and when going by your home they will push the snow in front of the driveway. The homeowner is responsible for access to their driveway. The only way to avoid extra shoveling is to wait until the crews have done their final cleanup on the street.

**How long do I have to clear my sidewalk?** Per City Code, property owners are responsible for removing snow and ice from the sidewalk along their property line within 24 hours after a storm and keeping them clear.