The South Wedge Victory Garden Opens

By Robert Boyd

An urban farm has sprouted on the vacant lot at 122 Hamilton Street through the efforts of volunteers from around the Greater Rochester area. The Victory Garden provides an opportunity for South Wedge residents to have access to low cost, healthy, fresh vegetables. The project will also increase gardeners’ physical activity and build community.

Over 70 families applied for a garden space, but unfortunately we were able to accommodate only 34. If you would like to help us grow bigger Victory Gardens in the future, please consider contributing to another site. We could easily provide 30 additional families an opportunity to grow their own produce. Please contact me at 256-1740, ext 102.

The Garden’s construction was the work of an incredible group of 125 volunteers who provided over 700 hours of labor. Space limitations prevent us from listing all the names, but their help was greatly appreciated. We should all take pride in the garden, and the people who will have access to healthy vegetables all summer.

Some volunteers live in the South Wedge and other supporters came from around the Rochester area. The building and filling of the raised beds was performed as the Eagle Scout project of Ian Steltmann of Troop 218 in Fairport, New York. He coordinated the work and recruited additional volunteers from his family and scout troop.

Two groups from the University of Rochester – Alpha Phi Omega (a service organization) cleaned the lot, while the Net Impact organization at the University of Rochester’s Simon School of Business planted forsythia and helped fill the beds.

Volunteers from Xerox Corporation came out for the Day of Caring and built the wooden arbor at the garden’s entrance, and performed many other tasks to make the garden and neighborhood look so much better. Volunteers from Clean Sweep built walkways.

Many businesses provided in kind support and discounts to reduce the project costs. Generous supporters included RC Supermarket, the Home Depot in Henrietta and the Garden Factory in Gates.

Many thanks go to Peter Saxe, administrator of the Southeast Neighborhood Services Center. He provided logistical support in making the project a reality. Thanks again to residents who volunteered their time to work and for the many people who provided snacks and beverages for the workers.

Please come and visit the garden and see how things are growing!

Recession Procession Crowd Jams Wedge Streets

By Nancy O’Donnell

South Avenue was packed with hundreds of recession weary walkers during a May 7 neighborhood crawl organized by City Paper and the Business Association of the South Wedge Area (BASWA). Colorfully called “F%& the Recession,” the three-hour evening event promised low, low prices in area businesses, cafes and bars. Ecco Bella Bakery offered 50 cent frosting shots. Lux Lounge sold $1 PBRs and Hedorist Chocolates created 25¢ chocolate medallions.

“We started planning in March,” said BASWA president and Historic Houseparts owner Christine Jones. “The businesses were very receptive, coming up with ridiculous prices.” Many of the business owners were “shell shocked” by the end of the evening. “Jennifer at Henderson [Artisan Chocolates] said she had over 360 people in her door, and [her shop is] down an alley. Little Venice ran out of pepperoni pizza and Casey [Holenbeck at Mise En Place] sold tens of meatballs in his buy one get one free offer,” said Jones.

“Beale Street was selling sliders [mini burgers] and had a line from the hostess area, out the door and wrapping around the building. They had to stop...continued on page 10

On Saturday May 2, 2009, almost 200 “City of Rochester Clean Sweep” volunteers descended upon the South Wedge. They worked on cleaning and mulching of Byron Street, Star Alley and the South Wedge Victory Garden. They collected almost fifty bags of trash, spread 20 yards of mulch, and pulled thousands of weeds. They worked to make our neighborhood better.

(Photo by Robert Boyd)

Wedgestock 2009 is Coming!

This year Wedgestock will be held on August 30 at the Highland Bowl starting at 2:00 p.m. We will be featuring local artists who will exhibit and sell some of their arts and crafts as well as a food judging contest. Expect family fun--kids crafts and games--as well as various local bands.

Make sure you join us for this South Wedge neighborhood event!
Star of the Wedge – Robert Lauterbach
By Nancy O’Donnell

Robert Lauterbach celebrates his family history with a Lauterbach T-shirt outside his 1908 carriage house. (Photo by Nancy O’Donnell)

Robert Lauterbach credits a still small inner voice, telling him to buy his grandfather’s house on Sanford Street, which got him the happy place he is in today. Seven years later, says he, “It was the best decision I ever made.”

“I walk 100 yards to get my car repaired,” says Lauterbach. “I walk the 100 yards to get an Irish stout, 300 yards to get to my bank, Genesee Co-op. I got the best chunked beef I’ve ever eaten on St. Patrick’s Day [last year] at Mise En Place. Beale Street. Wine Bar. All are within walking distance of my house.”

Robert Lauterbach’s family history is tightly woven with that of the South Wedge. His grandfather William opened a hardware store on South Avenue in 1899. Later William’s three sons ran the operation: “Harold stocked, Bill was President and Herbert was the bookkeeper.” His Uncle Bill kept the store open until 1995 when he was in his 90s.

In 1922, William’s younger brother, Herbert, bought the old Inman home on Sanford Street and lived there for the rest of his life. “I used to love to sit in the shade of his carriage house,” says Lauterbach. “One day, one of the horses got out of control. I called the horse doctor. He was walking PAC-TAC for his new neighborhood and later he worked with SWPC’s Neighborhood Council. When he joined Calvary St. Andrew Church, he began working with its Emergency Food Cupboard. Now he is coordinator of the program. “I try to stay out of the way. I just have great volunteers,” says Lauterbach.

The Food Pantry is the only one in the city open every day morning. It responds to the needs of “100 clients on average.” Lauterbach praises the Boys Scouts and Postal Workers for their food drives and Foodlink for its assistance. “He also serves on its Advisory Board.”

“We get the unemployed, the underemployed,” said Lauterbach. “Families who are suddenly bigger because other family members move in.”

On the days he’s not contributing to the larger community, Bob works on a community vegetable garden on a lot owned by landlord Steve Dingman. Along with neighbors Bob Carr, Chris Iorio, Debra Lewis and Lucas Jordan, Lauterbach tills, weeds and plants. This year, he’s added “five rows of corn, 75-80 seeds per row, so if it all grows, we should have about 400 corn plants” with a row of green beans, bok plants, and beets, and a row of turnips.

“It was a formal garden in the 1920s and 30s,” said Lauterbach. “Mother Nature had taken over the place. It had 30 or 40 maple trees and grape vines.” (Visit http://picasaweb.google.com/ RBBLauterbach/Smallargar to see photos from Frank Kline’s “wonderful garden.”)

If anything in the Wedge bothers him, it’s the loss of trees and the lack of fruit trees. “If you’re hungry, plant an apple or pear tree. I got three bushes of peaches. I canned last year.”

For now Lauterbach is enjoying the start of a new summer, waiting for the arrival of two new grandchildren, and happy to be back home in the Wedge. •

Letters to the Editor

I just wanted you and your staff to know what a great job I think you do with the newspaper. I live on Reservoir Ave and have been reading it faithfully for a couple of years. I actually do read it cover to cover. Great grass roots activism and sharing of information. Good to see reports on the REAL local news. It helps the citizens of the Wedge feel genuinely connected. Keep up the excellent work. — Susan Mandl

Thank you so much for including notice of our wedding in the “South Wedge Social Calendar!” (April/May 2009) And thank you for including information to inform people about the current state of affairs in New York State, at the federal level and how that compares with the U.K.

Our experience is that many people are not really very aware of how unfairly lesbian and gay couples are treated by our current laws. Once they are, most people see the injustice and are shocked. Our story, like many others, highlights why the laws in New York State and at the federal level need changing. Thank you for raising awareness and contributing to the struggle for civil rights and marriage equality!

With announcements in Iowa and Vermont recently the timing was perfect and your willingness to publish our story is greatly appreciated.

Thanks again! — Colin Coffey and Brandunde

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You can also join online at www.swpc.org
Johnston began “working through” the abuse using art as therapy more than a decade ago. “My initial response was shock. Work like this can be really difficult,” said Dan Lar- kin, an associate professor and program chair and thesis advisor in RIT’s Fine Arts and Photog- raphy Dept. “She handled it so sensitively, so maturely. She wasn’t trying to shock but to raise awareness. It’s really brilli- ant.”

Johnston, who is moving to Philadelphia, plans to expand her work into a book length por- trait of childhood sexual abuse.

Granny’s Not Just About Ice Cream Anymore

Granny’s ice cream owner Patrick Belleisle has added something extra to the ice cream cones, sundaes and pies at his South Goodman Street shop. Along with a scoop or two, lo- cals are flocking to hear Celidh Connection, a Scottish small pipe band, which practices in Granny’s side parlor one night each week.

On the freeze front, Belle- ise has added five new fla- vors: Grasshopper Pie (“mint ice cream with fudge ribbons and chocolate cookie pieces, but no grasshoppers”), Coconut Mango Swirl, Watermelon Sor- bet, and European Chocolate Caramel Swirl (“made from Belgian chocolate”).

Mansha Young, who made a recent visit to Granny’s from her Cobbs Hill home, had only praise for her “Bittersweet Sin- phony” (a chocolate/coffee blend) cone. “It’s excellent. You don’t often get bittersweet chocolate,” said Young. “I felt like I had sinned [it was so good].”

Granny’s Ice Cream, 739 South Goodman Street. Hours Mon-Thurs. 3-9 p.m., Fri-Sat. 6-10 p.m., Sun. 12-10 p.m. – 10 p.m.

Photo by James Graves

Lorrie Sprecher at Equal-Grounds. (Photo by Nancy O’Donnell)

SWPC Board member Dave Halter Update

SWPC Board member and South Wedge advocate Dave Halter, who suffered a stroke in late April, is now recuperating at Kirkhaven. Visitors are welcome! Cards can be sent to Dave c/o 254 Alexander St., Rochester, NY 14607, 461-1991.

Happy Birthday, Dear Freddy

The new improved Lamber- ton Conservatory was the scene of a birthday celebration for Frederick Law Olmsted, famed 19th century American landscape designer best known for Central Park.

In Rochester, Olmsted de- signed Highland Park, Geneva, and Seneca Parks along with small- er Jones Park and Washington Park. He is credited with the development of Maplewood Park.

The birthday party was hosted by the Highland Park Conservancy and the Monroe County Parks Department. Co- sponsors included the Land- mark Society of Western New York’s Olmsted Parks Sub- committee and The Friends and Neighbors of Seneca Park reported Tim O’Connell, co- organizer of the event and member of the Highland Park Conservancy.

On deck, chair of the Olmsted Subcommittee of the Landmark Society Pres- ervations Issues Committee, was co-organizer along with Miriam Ganze, a member of Friends and Neighbors of Seneca Park.

Urbavores Offers Back- yard Garden Aid

The green garden building business, has moved into the South Wedge. Owners Beth Donovan and Milly Allen are missions to “empower families and com- munities to produce their own food, organically, in their own yards, and establish a healthy, diverse harvest.”

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To learn more, call (518) 424-6270 or visit urbavores. com.
By Allison Clark

BASWA Pours on the Pancake Batter

BASWA Members teamed up with School #12 PTA to serve pancakes to 700 students and faculty. Hedonist Chocolatier Jenni-Duquette and Paula Stadtmiller, from SWPC Director Bob (Photo by Nancy O'Donnell) and get comfy.

Books in the Park

The Hamilton Tenants

Elects New Officers

On April 23, The Hamilton Tenants Association held its election for new officers. Elected to service are: Yvonne Williams, president; Annie Rose Galewitsch, vice president; and Monroe Holland, treasurer. The officers will serve in these positions until April 2011.

South Avenue Beautification Projects

Concrete planters are filling up with sweet potato vine, licorice, ornamental grasses, petunias in the coming weeks thanks to BASWA. The Garden Factory greenhouses gave the arrangements from seed. Last year’s plastic pots are being used to save money and resources. Business owners are asked to help keep garbage out of the planters close to their business; BASWA will keep them watered and fertilized. The business association has also purchased three new cast iron benches that will be installed on Mt. Hope Avenue at the new bump outs when they are completed. They will add more banners to the new street lights once they are installed.

SWPC Summer intern Bobby Blocker (Photo by Nancy O'Donnell)

The Third Thursday Concert Series 2009 begins on May 21 and continues through October 15. Along with the free music, a Summer Stimulus Series will repeat the giant success of the Recession Procession (see story on page 1).

Highland Park Conservancy Pruning Demo

On Saturday, June 13, 9:00 a.m., Mark Quinn and Noelle Nagle will conduct a discussion and demonstration on “Pruning: What is It and How are You Supposed to Do It?” You will get to watch the experts prune a lilac. Meet at the Pansey Bed.

New Art Totems to Line South Avenue

Business Association of the South Wedge Area (BASWA) received ten totem designs that they selected as finalists reports President Christine Jones. “Nine local artists created these designs for us, including two of last year’s artists, three RIT Students, and four other experienced craftspeople,” said Jones. The sculptures will also serve as bicycle racks and will be installed in the commercial area from Byron Street to Averill, and on Gregory Street near Cayuga. They will be unveiled at the Third Thursday event on June 18.

Many thanks to AHC

SWPC and Joint Venture Partners Marketview Heights Association, NCS Community Development Corporation and North East Area Development want to express our thanks to the NYS Affordable Housing Corporation (AHC) for awarding our partnership $600,000 in grant funding.

Half of these funds will be used to supplement the partnership’s Emergency Assistance Repair Program contract with the City of Rochester. The other half will supplement repairs in the city’s focused investment areas.

The NYS AHC has been very generous in its support of owner-occupied home repair programs in the Rochester area, and we are grateful for their continued support.

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South Wedge Market Opens with Inaugural Lettuce Toss

By Vicki and Chris Hartman

The South Wedge Farmers’ Market opens for its third year of operation on Thursday, June 4 with an exciting Opening Day Celebration. Join us for the Inaugural Lettuce Toss! The Market will continue to run each Thursday, June through October from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., behind Boulder Coffee Company (the corner of S. Clinton and Alexander). For more information, visit online at www.swfarmersmarket.org and make sure you are signed up to get weekly newsletters on what’s happening at the market.

After much evaluation and community input, the South Wedge Farmers’ Market is poised to be an even more amazing community resource this year. Expect to find more selections and varieties of foods, a broader range of price options, more sustainable food choices, and prepared foods to eat at the market. And don’t forget the live music and free kids activities every week!

Look for the market’s 2009 posters and fliers. The market community of neighbors, farmers, organizers, and shoppers is being celebrated and featured! One of the South Wedge Farmers’ Market’s themes for 2009 will be a celebration of the “Market Community.” As part of this, market organizers are working to gather portraits of everyone that has been part of the South Wedge Farmers’ Market story: neighbors, farmers, organizers, shoppers, musicians, visiting artists, and community supporters. Portraits have all ready been taken for the posters, but we will continue to take more portraits throughout the season at the market. Be part of the historical documentation of this project and the market’s public art initiative around community and food. There will be an on-line gallery and various displays at the market and around town, showcasing the Market Family Photo Gallery!

Come see what has become one of the most successful and exciting farmers’ markets in the area, join your friends and neighbors and find the finest of fresh, affordable foods, and enjoy Thursdays in the Wedge! See you at the market! ♦

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United Way’s Day of Caring

The Arbor raising at the garden’s entrance brought volunteers from Xerox Corporation to help the Wedge.
South Wedge Victory Garden

Eagle Scouts from Troop 208 begin building the raised beds and filling them with top soil and compost. Ian Steltmann completed all 28 boxes as part of his community service project. Helping the South Wedge helped Ian become an Eagle Scout.

Clean Sweep 2009

Clean Sweep attracted about 100 volunteers. Many joined in the building of the Victory Garden.

Completed Victory Garden

(Top left) Linda Coleman, Tracey Seville and Rose O'Keefe enjoy the finished walkway and pagoda in the Victory Garden. On top right and below, beds are now filled with seeds and sprouts, trellises are ready for climbing beans and cucumbers. Next up, waiting, weeding, watering.
Gardens of Distinction

By Nancy O'Donnell

Some might argue that our entire community could be nominated as a garden of distinction. Pocket or palatial, gardens are blooming all over our neighborhoods because of the hard work and good taste of our gardeners.

Here are just three of our favorites. Look for more in our August/September issue.

Washburn’s ‘Working Woman’s Garden’

Alexandra Marris’ describes her as a “working woman’s garden.”

At the end of a work day in summer, Marris goes to her vegetable garden and asks herself, “What’s for dinner?” She’s planted collard greens, kale, tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers and lots of salad greens including mesclun alongside a bank of old raspberry bushes.

“Everything is organic, and much is started by seed,” says Marris who often gardens into the dark on weekdays and depends on a lot of mulching.

Marris’ ultimate goal is to slowly “dump out” all the grass on her property. In her second year, “bump out” all the grass and lots of grass is started by seed,” says Marris who often gardens into the dark on weekdays and depends on a lot of mulching.

Marris’ special gardening tip: “Observe. Be in tune with nature. See what [plants] do. You have to watch. You have to look at them everyday. You’ll get to know they’re stressed.”

Her biggest gardening surprise? “I got a call from a neighbor who said, ‘Hey, do you know you have a pumpkin on your roof?’ I found that the vine had crawled up to the shed roof. I got a pumpkin a foot in diameter.”

Oakland Street’s Memo-ry Garden

“On my first year here I planted a weeping larch on Mother’s Day in honor of my mother,” said Paula Frumusa speaking of her deceased mother Shirley.

The tree in her small front yard has grown into a graceful “S” shape that she carefully cultivates to remember her mother.

“I wanted my house to feel like a cottage in the wood,” says Frumusa, pointing to the “wonderful locust tree” that fronts her house. “I was living in Greece, and I fell in love with the South Wedge.”

She has achieved the “woodland garden” filling her garden beds with delicate Lily of the Valley, Forget-me-nots, Bleeding Heart, Bachelor Buttons and Drumstick Allium. Like many of the neighborhood gardeners, Frumusa welcomes giveaways and exchanges. Her tulips came courtesy of a Highland Park replanting a few years ago (the Park now charges for the bulbs). The green ferns that fringe her steps came from a trip to the Adirondacks. Next-door neighbor David Sell gave her some purple brunnera and “lots of moral support” as she began her garden.

“Shesurprised me this year,” said Sell.

Frumusa continues to add to her front garden including a Japanese maple while enjoying an established her back garden.

This garden contains strawberries, raspberries and roses, a Rose of Sharon and Butterfly Bush.

Reservoir Avenue’s Lily Pond Paradise

Carol and Paul Gardner’s front yard on Reservoir Avenue is a showcase of verdant greens and colorful brights along with a carefully placed driftwood natural sculpture.

“The garden is always in the process of changing—bigger, bigger and bigger,” says Carol, who admits that she doesn’t keep the identifying tags on some of her plantings. Being surprised by what comes up is part of the fun. “I don’t even know the names for some of the plants.”

Head for the backyard, and you’ll discover an enchanted water-filled garden that seems far away from city life.

A deep purple wisteria hangs above the entrance to the back garden next to a brilliant pink and white cherry tree. Inside two ponds share the space. On one, the Gardners have placed a giant standing stone frog above the lily pad and waterlily-flowered pond swimming with orange fish. Water hyacinths are planted to “keep the water clean.”

“We had two large koi,” says Carol. “One day they dis-appeared.” She’s still not sure where they went or who took them.

In summer, Carol says she can “spend all day poking around.” “I put annuals in pots, and I put in whatever catches my eye,” Carol says.
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Hedonist Chocolates: 25 cent Chocolate Medallions 5:00-8:00

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Echo-Tone Music: 10% Off Everything in Store 5:00-8:00

Godiva’s: 20% Off Everything in the Store 5:00-7:00

Caverly’s Irish Pub: $3 Irish 20 or Pints 5:00-8:00

Thread: 10% Off Everything in the Store 5:00-7:00

Lux Lounge: $1.00/PBR Cans 8:00-10:00

Little Venice Pizza: $1.00/Slice 5:00-8:00

Premier Pastry: $3 Cupcakes at Star Alley Park

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Open Face Sandwich Eatery: Free Summer Iced Tea w/Purchase of A Sandwich 4-7:00

South Wedge Farmer’s Market: $4 Local Bloody Marys (Non-Alcoholic) Star Alley 8-10

Tap & Mallet: JUNE 18/AUGUST 20: $1 off Seasonal Drafts 5:00-8:00

JULY 16: $3 pints of Flying Dog - “In-Heal Wheat”

Mise En Place: JUNE 18: $4 Chicken Cutlet Sandwich w/Pesto Mayo, Lettuce, Tomato 5:00-8:00

JULY 16: 2/$2.50 DIRTY DOWS Zweigles Red or White Hot with Chili & Cheddar 5:00-8:00

AUGUST 20: Buy One Meatball Get One Free! 5:00-8:00

Eco Bella Bakery: JUNE 18: 25 cents from each purchase donated to Farm Sanctuary 5:00-8:00

JULY 16: 25 cents from each purchase donated to Wayne County Humane Soc. 5-8:00

AUGUST 20: 25 cents from each purchase donated to AIFS Rochester 5:00-8:00

Pinky’s Pet Connection: JUNE 18: 20% off all Cha Cha Couture Line 5:00-8:00

JULY 16: 1/2 Off Barker’s Duanen 5:00-8:00

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Averill Avenue is Daffy for Daffodils
By Doug Root

Thanks to the City of Rochester, Averill Avenue residents between South and Mount Hope Avenues are enjoying a burst of yellow this spring. Last fall, neighbors on Averill Avenue took advantage of the city’s program which provided daffodils to city residents interested in beautifying their streets.

“It’s nice to see the burst of color from the hundreds of daffodils,” says Doug Root, Averill Avenue resident and gardener. This is just the start of what’s to come on Averill in the coming year. Residents Doug Root, Cheryl Stevens and Brian Moore are bringing back the Averill Avenue Block Club to help revitalize and unite the street. Plans include more landscaping improvements in addition to the fun activities for neighbors.

“It’s an exciting time to live in the South Wedge,” said Stevens, a long time resident of Averill. “It has taken many years to achieve the renaissance we are now seeing.”

Small World Bakery Changes to Home Delivery
By Small World Collective

For a year and a half now, Small World Bakery has been baking whole-grain breads from local, organic ingredients and selling them at farmers’ markets, health food stores, and, briefly, from a makeshift storefront in the South Wedge. The group recently developed another way for people to get their breads: a membership program based on weekly neighborhood deliveries. The program is modeled after the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) concept, in which members sign up with a farm and receive fresh fruits and vegetables every week for the entire season. While there are many CSAs providing fresh produce in the Rochester area, Small World Bakery is the first to offer baked goods.

The membership program helps strengthen the connections between farmers, bakers, and eaters. Since Small World buys its wheat directly from local farmers, knowing how much of each crop we’ll need helps strengthen the connection.

“With the CSA,” says baker Luke Stodola, “we’ve had many cases where we’ve sold more than expected and run out of ingredients. When a member joins, we’re able to make sure we’ll have enough ingredients on hand to make their bread every week.”

After the bread is baked, it is delivered to locations throughout the Rochester region. Members could pick up at their work, school, church, or community center, at a neighborhood business or farmers’ market, or even just at a neighbor’s house.

People who belong to a CSA for vegetables can choose to pick up their bread at the same time they get their regular share. “Pick up location are being added regularly,” says baker Eli Rubin. “As more people in a neighborhood join we will start biking out to additional neighborhood drop spots.”

The cost of a membership depends on the type and amount of bread. $200 each year gets you one loaf a week along with occasional extras like sweets, granolas, and specialty breads. Details can be found online at www.smallworldbakery.com or by calling Eli at 609-802-1641.

While the bakery has closed its South Wedge storefront, it will continue selling at neighborhood farmers’ markets, including the South Wedge Farmers’ Market, which begins this year on June 4th, and the Monroe Village Farmers’ Market, which begins on June 17th. Abundance Co-op also carries many items from Small World Bakery.
Wedge History - Southview Towers and Elliot Landsman

By Ben White

In the early 1970s, before the South Wedge was as we know it today, the corner at South Avenue and Alexander Street was similar to today's intersection in name only. No Nathaniel Square, no grocery store, no South Wedge Colony sports bar, and no building exceeding three-stories in height. The intersection was populated with slum housing and a Texaco station that had been the site of more than one homicide.

It was around this time that the New York State Urban Development Corporation (UDC), operating today as the Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC), took notice of the southern side of Rochester. Hoping to provide state-subsidized housing as well as rejuvenate the area, the UDC looked for someone to take on the task of developing their first facility in the region. Elliot Landsman, at the urging of his socially-conscious college age children, decided he could be the person to make it happen.

Mr. Landsman had no experience with developing housing complexes prior to building Southview; his background was in industrial commercial projects. Undeterred, he embarked on a task to develop what would become one of the area's premier and cutting-edge affordable housing development. To accomplish this, he and his late wife Dottie took the time to investigate what other area senior housing facilities lacked. Mr. Landsman said that simply providing him with a blueprint for a successful housing complex

"It became a sense of mission because we saw an unmet need," said Landsman.

Although many of the amenities Southview provides for its tenants seem commonplace by today's standards, Mr. Landsman noted there was a surprising lack of foresight in many of the facilities of the time. Devices such as lever-operated door handles and low-rise bathtub taps with safety handles and regulated water temperatures were innovative conveniences back then. He made sure windows were lowered so that tenants in wheelchairs could watch the world outside. Parquet floors were installed so those in wheelchairs could move about more easily.

Doors leading into hallways didn't lock, sparing residents the inconvenience of tracking down the building manager if they got locked out of an apartment. Even minute details were addressed: gas stoves over electric (so residents knew when a burner was hot) placing knobs on the front (to help tenants avoid unnecessary burns). By listening to the requests of the people who would occupy Southview, Mr. Landsman provided seniors with suitable and comfortable independent-living conditions.

Furthermore, because it was a UDC project, the rent was made affordable for those on Social Security and other limited monthly stipends. A person could rent an apartment at Southview for 30% of his/her income. For a financially strapped area, lacking other viable housing options for its elderly, Southview seemed an inviting solution.

"It was cutting edge, but it was really common sense," Mr. Landsman said. But as former Southview employee Tom Cantin noted, the opening of Southview had its problems. "High-rises were scary to Rochesterians," he said.

Because the site was still viewed by many as an inner-city location, it was considered less than inviting. Many area residents lived in housing run by slumlords and memories of the slayings at the Texaco station lingered. Another obstacle was that many area's senior citizens were living on generous Kodak pensions, so they had little need for subsidized housing. To further complicate matters, the paperwork needed to move someone into Southview was extensive, initially topping 21 pages. The towing structure was nearly a colossal failure. After the first tenants moved in on a rainy opening day, the number of applicants dwindled to a trickle. As Cantin recalled, he was practically unable to give apartments away.

Salvation came in the form of Father Bill Frankenhausen, a local priest. He approached Mr. Landsman with a request for housing to accommodate people with physical and mental challenges. At the same time, Cantin made contact with the Al Sigl Center with a similar proposal to bring in new residents. The new residents were placed on a waiting list, but they could show they were able to live independently. When they were able, they moved to apartments elsewhere in the building.

In those days many places would not accept persons with physical or mental disabilities and initially these new residents were resentful by existing tenants, according to Mr. Landsman, but over time their misgivings gave way to acceptance.

He said, "There was a sense of caring not only by residents for each other, but by the staff as well."

After a bumpy beginning, Southview gained a reputation for accommodating residents with disabilities and soon senior citizens began viewing it as a more viable option for retirement housing.

Although the building itself has seen few dramatic structural changes over its 30-plus years of existence, updated electrical and heating systems, as well as new windows have been installed.

Cantin has long since left Southview, and Mr. Landsman has gone on to develop many more housing complexes, yet both are proud of the impact both Southview had on the area. "It became the rebirth of the area," Mr. Landsman said.

While other UDC projects have been considered failures, Southview Towers should be considered a success. It provided the area with its first major affordable housing and started a steady process of rejuvenation that continues today. By reaching out to the community, listening to its wishes and providing needed services, Eliot Landsman and Southview Towers helped make the South Wedge safer and more welcoming.

Mr. Landsman was the 1988 recipient of the University of Rochester's Associates Medal in recognition of his outstanding service to both the University and the community, and the recipient of the 2001 Alex de Toqueville Award for outstanding volunteer contributions.

He is a member of The Rochester Area Chapter of the New York State Association of Community REALTORS® (NYSAR), New York State Association of Realtors, Inc. (NYSAR), and Greater Rochester Association of Realtors, Inc. (GRAR). ◆