



Notes of the fourth meeting of the Midtown Museum District Neighborhood Association held on Wednesday 17th December 2008 at the Fairfield Inn and Suites 2520 N. Central Avenue, Phoenix Arizona from 6.30pm to 8.30pm.

1. Introduction and welcome to the event

Julia Tourville and Margaret Dietrich welcomed everyone to the meeting and Julia introduced the guest speakers for the evening.

2. Keynote presentations

2.1 John Swanson; Vehicle Program Manager for Metro light rail

John oversaw the design of the Metro Light Rail vehicles. Before coming to Phoenix, he developed light-rail vehicles in France, Germany and the United Kingdom. He talked about the unique challenges of designing trains for safety and accessibility, as well as having comfortable interiors, looking stylish and operating in the Valley's extreme heat!

The design of the cars had been developed over many years following an extensive public involvement program. Features of the new Light Rail cars include:

- Low floor vehicles that can be accessed directly from the platform
- An incident-friendly design with a shock- absorbing bumper on the front-end of the car that's also designed to push things out of the path of the train, and skirts along the sides that not only reduce noise but also keep people and things from getting caught under the train
- Attractive interiors that are vandal resistant and easy to keep clean
- Plenty of windows and fully glazed doors for optimal visibility
- Space for up to four bicycles, located away from wheelchair area
- Wide passageways for wheelchair access
- Good passenger security with cameras and a passenger-operated intercom for emergency situations
- Interior and external monitoring systems at various points throughout the cars
- Light color to minimize heat gain.

During the discussion, it was noted that the sound of the bells and horns at certain points on Central Avenue was reflected off adjacent high-rise buildings. This gave the impression that the train was coming from the opposite direction. Unfortunately this was a problem that could not be solved, so pedestrians and other road users should be vigilant and obey traffic signs. Driver training was continuing and the use of the horns was being restricted to emergency situations only.

The signaling strategy for the Light Rail was based on "Predictive Priority", as a "Total Priority" system would have snarled up traffic. Patrick Fuller is in charge of this work and it's hoped to have him at a future meeting. The signaling arrangements were kept under review and modifications were still being made to minimize traffic hold-ups.

It was noted that the City of Phoenix had given permission for four cars to carry advertising for the NBA Allstar Game major basketball event in 2009. MMDNA members were encouraged to contact their local Councilman if they wished to complain about advertising on the new cars. The contact details for Councilman Nowakowski are phoenix.gov/EMAIL/emdist7.html and Councilman Tom Simplot phoenix.gov/EMAIL/emdist4.html

John was thanked for his very interesting presentation and congratulated on being an integral part of the development of a state of the art Light Rail system.

2.2 Angela Dye:

Angela is the Principal, Owner of **ADYE** Design, a Landscape Architecture, Environmental and Urban Design company, located in the neighborhood at 99 East Virginia. She is a Fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects and will be the President of the Society in 2009. Angela has been involved with the development of the Light Rail stations from conceptual design through to construction, and has worked with a wide range of professionals throughout the process.

The Light Rail stations are part of the urban fabric and therefore have to be compatible with the neighborhoods in which they are based. The stations also have to be as comfortable as possible in a desert environment for people waiting for trains. The major challenge of keeping the stations as cool as possible, will be met in part by shade plants and screens. Angela's team did extensive research trials in three test gardens to find the best plants for the stations. 13 vines were selected that were tough in urban situations, used little water, and dropped few leaves/seeds/flowers. The vines are trained to provide vertical and/or horizontal screening to reduce heat and minimize heat build-up. Every station has been designed individually to reflect the amount of shade it receives, and to echo the local urban landscape. The Encanto Station for example has vertical (green) screens and the overhead sun shades have been curved to echo the design of the Viad (Dial) building.

In the post presentation discussion Angela recommended that the Neighborhood Association could be helpful in encouraging the use of sustainable design techniques for new and existing buildings/areas. It was encouraging to note that the City of Phoenix was revising the Planning and Zoning codes to incorporate sustainable design techniques.

More information about some of the work the city is doing on urban design is on <http://phoenix.gov/PLANNING/vnew0503.pdf>. Two other sites of interest are the Green Building Council www.usgbc.org and the American Society of Landscape Architects www.asla.org

Angela was thanked for her interesting presentation and for the tremendous contribution to the Neighborhood. Angela can be contacted at angela@adyedesign.com (www.adyedesign.com)

4. Grand Stuffing Party 13th December 2008

Margaret and Julia thanked everyone who had taken part in the event, and made it such a tremendous success. The students from the Arizona Agribusiness & Equine High School, South Mountain Campus were congratulated on their hard work and support to the project and Dr Conley (MMDNA Resident) was thanked for arranging for such enthusiastic and able students to help the neighborhood.

77 people took part in the event, with a total of 272 "person" hours. 10,000 bags were filled and the room was vacated 10 minutes before the deadline. Doxa Central LLC were thanked for their generosity to the Association both in their financial contribution to the Community Information Project, and by providing the facilities and the security staff on the day.

The project raised sufficient funds to cover the costs, with leaving a balance of \$103.44.

5. Light Rail party 27th December

Margaret thanked everyone who had signed up to help on the 27th December. The MMDNA is one of six booths at Encanto and Central station. There are two other stations in the neighborhood as well so volunteers are still needed to help at the Encanto booth and for a smaller number of people to help at Park Central, which is holding both the Thomas and Osborn parties.

Volunteers are asked to contact Margaret at midtownmuseumdistrict@gmail.com if they are able to do one or more two hour shifts. A timetable will be drawn up before the day to make sure volunteers have an opportunity to ride the rail as well!

6. Financial report

Margaret reported that the MDNA has had \$1,225.00 in donations to date, and after \$1,121.56 in expenses for the Light Rail project, it has a balance of \$103.44.

7. Social Events

The Heard Museum Guild have generously invited MMDNA members to a Cheese and Wine evening at the Heard Museum on Tuesday 13th January 2009 from 6.00pm to 8.00pm. The event will be in the Berlin Gallery and will be strictly limited to 50 people on a first come first served basis. RSVPs are essential. Please contact Beth Wickenden on (602) 296 4263 to reserve your place. To find out more about the Guild go to www.heardguild.org

The Heard Museum has a wide variety of events over the forthcoming months. These include:

- a new exhibition “Mothers and Daughters in Clay” starting January 10 at 9.30am
- Landscape Redefined presented by the Berlin Gallery January 4 to January 30
- Guild Library Book Sale and Treasure market January 24 and 25
- World Hoop Dance Contest February 7 and 8
- 51st Annual Heard Museum Guild Indian Fair and Market March 7 and 8.

For more information go to www.heard.org , www.heardmuseumshop.com , or www.berlingallery.org

Margaret reported that arrangements were being made for a Social Event -possibly “Meet the Artist” at the After Hours Gallery on 116 W. McDowell.

8. Blockwatch

There had been quite a lot of interest in having a Blockwatch on Ashland, Hoover and Coronado. Margaret reported that the Police Department have a range of resources available to support Blockwatch groups in single family homes as well as in condos and apartment buildings. Doreena Wiegert will be invited to either the January or February meeting, to give more details. If there are volunteers to start a Blockwatch Doreena and her team can respond very quickly to help set them up. Contact Margaret at midtownmuseumdistrict@gmail.com

9. Supporting local businesses

There has been a lot of support for the MMDNA from local businesses. In the new year, work will take place to see whether a number of businesses would be interested in forming a Business Alliance or Coalition. A business survey has been developed in conjunction with the City of Phoenix. The information gained from this can be used to determine economic development strategies for the area, as well as influencing zoning, and urban planning. It was felt to be very important to “market” the Midtown area as an “entity” to attract business and residents to the area.

10. Any other Businesses

10.1 2008 Holiday Pet Food Drive

Taylor Johnson, who works in the Neighborhood, gave a brief description of the Lost Home Pet Foundation's annual food drive. This helps to provide food to people for their pets during times of financial crisis. Taylor can be contacted on (602)595 2774 or by email on tjohnson@tmaaz.com and she will be pleased to provide more information.

11. Date, time and venue of the next meeting

Meetings are planned for the **fourth Wednesday** of the month from 6.30pm to 8.30pm. A schedule of venues for the next few months is being drawn up and will be published in the New Year.