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University District  
Community Association

Winter 2015

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### **Receiving UDCA emails?**

sign up for our emails at [www.udcaonline.com](http://www.udcaonline.com) to receive information on upcoming events and news around the neighborhood.



Keep up with UDCA meetings, events, bulk pick-up and recycling days, and more by visiting our UDCA calendar on our website. [www.udcaonline.com/calendar](http://www.udcaonline.com/calendar)



[www.udcaonline.com](http://www.udcaonline.com)

The University District NEWSLETTER is published in March, June, September, and December. Its purpose is to inform residents of activities and matters of common interest and concern. Residents are encouraged to submit articles and advertisements. The NEWSLETTER retains the right to edit articles and refuse publication.

udca



# Letter From The President

by *Nora Gessert*



2015 is just about over and what a year it has been! We are seeing record numbers of young(er) people moving into the University District, including young families, retirees from across the country, and single folk buying homes and rehabbing them. All of this bodes well for our community.

As President, I receive numerous calls from people looking to buy our homes. They are looking for the fixer uppers-- there are quite a few. They have the energy and the interest to take a rough home and make it a beauty. We need this influx of youth in the neighborhood and on our Board. In a recent discussion with an Emeritus member of the Palmer Woods Board, I was told that it took about two years to get used to, but that new, younger Board members were energetic and involved. What they brought to the Board has been a breath of fresh air that was long overdue.

Our neighborhood and Board is and should be transforming. As new people come to the neighborhood, we need to engage them quickly and embrace their energy and ideas. They are our future and have so many great ideas! When we have the chance, we should select someone new to our neighborhood to serve on the Board or as part of a committee--they may bring a fresh perspective.

In keeping with “engaging the new,” 2016 saw a renewal of both the Social and Youth Committees, both chaired by new members to the Board and/or our community. These two committees are exactly what the UDCA needs to attract and retain residents. Later in this issue you will see an article about the event at La Dolce Vita—attendance was so good, we ran out of room-- a good problem-- as a result of a great event. Thank you to the committee for all their hard work. We also had a youth day with all types of “kids get wet” events. These two events are just a sample of how your dues support the neighborhood. Others include a new website, ongoing maintenance of residential standards, membership campaigns, two annual meetings and the newsletter. Your

dues are what allow us to support events and programs. To all of you who support the UDCA we thank you!

In my last column as President, I want to say that the most fun this last year was talking to the neighbors. From issues of barking dogs and trash cans, to assisting with Belden Park, it was all a pleasure. One learns that there is little we can do to get others to comply with city codes, but there are people who are committed to making our neighborhood even greater. This includes our Neighborhood Police Officers, Officer Anding and Sgt. Bledsoe as well as Captain Balinski. They have helped us come up with strategies for traffic calming and showed us trends that confirm that we live in one of the safest areas in Metro Detroit. Kim Tandy, our Office of Neighborhood Manager, has been patient as she teaches us what we can impact and how she can help. It takes time and patience to address our worst offenders, but it's important to know that between the committees and members of the community, we are working to address them.

If you have not paid your dues for 2016, do so before the end of December and save \$10. More important your dues allow us to provide programs and services that make the UDCA a great place to live. Thank you for supporting the UDCA.

# Residential Standards Committee Update

Our neighborhood has been around for years-- before the days of neighborhood covenants. If someone had a complaint, they would talk directly to their neighbors and the problems would be resolved. As the demographics of neighborhoods changed due to age, death, loss of income, employment concerns, etc., these areas of diversity brought about change in the values and attitudes of many residents. In order to sustain stable, safe, and desirable neighborhoods, many areas began to form neighborhood covenants, such as neighborhood associations. Since most people don't like confrontation with their neighbors over problems, it became easier to resolve the problems through a homeowner's association. The UDCA can step in and try and be a neutral party. In the event of a complaint, the UDCA will mail a letter to the homeowner letting them know of the complaint. It includes a reminder of the covenants and suggestions on how to fix the situation. Our goal is to try to educate and assist in finding a solution. The letter includes the city ordinance which is being violated to back up the complaint. If the association can't resolve an issue internally, it reluctantly brings in city officials. Involving city officials is by no means an attempt to pick on anyone. It's just the vehicle of enforcement to ensure we all share in the entitlement of the neighborhood, ensure it is a good place to live and that it looks good.

The majority of complaints reported to Residential Standards are related to barking dogs, un-kept yards, houses without numbers, and violations in regards to yard waste and bulk pickup.

Open the dialogue to start building a relationship with your neighbors so that we can start to care for and respect each other. It really makes for a healthy neighborhood and complaints can be resolved without the threat of enforcement action.

Of course, at the other end of the spectrum there will always be the people who take the "You can't tell me how to live in my home because I

bought it” stance. We should continue to try to be tactful and respectful in these situations.

For ongoing issues or complaints, you should contact Residential Standards. The committee will attempt to resolve the issue and if they’re unable to do so, the complaint will be forwarded to the appropriate government authority for resolution. While we make every effort to avoid this, sometimes it’s inevitable and comes with hefty fines and court fees.

We’ve all paid a hefty price for our homes, which is reflected in our taxes, and we have expectations of maintaining our property values. Little neighborhood nuisances can affect quality of life-- like neighbors who let their dogs bark at all hours or that neighbor who decides to mow their lawn at 6 a.m. every Saturday when you’re trying to sleep in. Hopefully these nuisances don’t occur or are resolved quickly. Our goal is to keep the University District appealing and desirable for all current and future residents.

UDCA Residential Standards Committee



# Another Successful Social Event!

by Meg Papi-Wark, Board of Directors,  
Social Committee Secretary

On Sunday, October 18th neighbors gathered at la Dolce Vita on Woodward to take part in “A Night in Italy.” Hors d’Oeuvres and wine were shared by all, and delightful conversations were heard around the room. UDCA’s Social Committee was reformed this year with excitement by several very active community members. The first event, which was held in April at 1917: American Bistro, also was a success, packing the upstairs of the local restaurant on the Avenue of Fashion. The fall event at la Dolce Vita saw record numbers, which is used as a motivating force as the Social Committee begins planning for an even grander Spring Event 2016. Special thanks to our fabulous Board of Directors who thoroughly supported the wine night as well as Committee Members who coordinated the event with enthusiasm.



A great deal of thanks goes out to all in attendance at the Wine Night on Sunday October 18th... it was all the great neighbors in attendance that made the event such a success. We look forward to seeing you at upcoming UDCA events!





# Holiday Safety Tips from the Detroit Police Department

The holiday season is here. Please share these safety/shopping tips with your family and friends!!!

- Never put gifts in your car and leave them unattended. If you have to go back into the mall...move your car to the other side of the mall
- Be mindful of your alcohol intake during holiday parties....the rule of thumb is one drink per hour
- Try to use debit cards when possible
- Learn to shop online...safe web pages have HTTPS at the top. The 'S' stands for "secure"
- Use valet when shopping at the mall
- Never park your car near the outer reaches of the parking lot...this is where the crimes are happening
- Use mall escorts to walk you to your car after dark
- Always shop in groups
- Never take large purses with you to shop...you will become a target
- Look around before you enter or exit your car
- Get your gas during rush hour or in the morning when people are going to work...never at night
- If you see anyone loitering or looking suspicious...keep going (for ATM's, Gas Stations...etc...)
- If someone bumps your car and you have a BAD feeling....go straight to the police station
- Never resist if a gun is produced during a robbery...give them your stuff
- Plug your space heater directly into the wall
- All of your electrical cords should be 'U.L.' approved
- Have a company "sweep" your chimney if you have not used it regularly during the last two or three years
- Never drive too close to the car in front of you so you won't get boxed in... allow enough room to pull out

**IMPORTANT:** Your safety is law enforcement's first priority!!

This is a general description of the subject matter. As always, if you have any questions please call me (313)215-0398 or email me [ricardorodgermoore@yahoo.com](mailto:ricardorodgermoore@yahoo.com).

Sincerely,

**RICARDO R. MOORE**

Police Commissioner, Detroit Police Department

# New 2016 Safety Whistle Program!

The UDCA Membership Committee is extremely excited about the upcoming membership drive for 2016. By now, every home in the neighborhood should have received a welcome letter and a 2016 invoice with a self-addressed envelope for mailing.

It is our hope that this will be a record year for membership participation which will give our UDCA Board the resources needed to provide a wide range of activities and projects for our community in 2016.

This year with your membership package you will receive an updated magnet with important numbers and dates, a 2016 membership card and, new this year, a safety rescue whistle.

The low tech, high impact whistle safety program will begin as neighbors pay their 2016 membership dues. Enrollees will be provided with information on how this program will work for them and the neighborhood as a safety enhancement. We have a limited number of whistles for the first phase of the program, so if you haven't yet taken advantage of the opportunity to enroll at the discount rate of \$50 (if paid before 12/31/15) please fill out the invoice in this newsletter and mail it today. You can also pay online through PayPal at [udcaonline.com](http://udcaonline.com).



Thank you for supporting your UDCA!

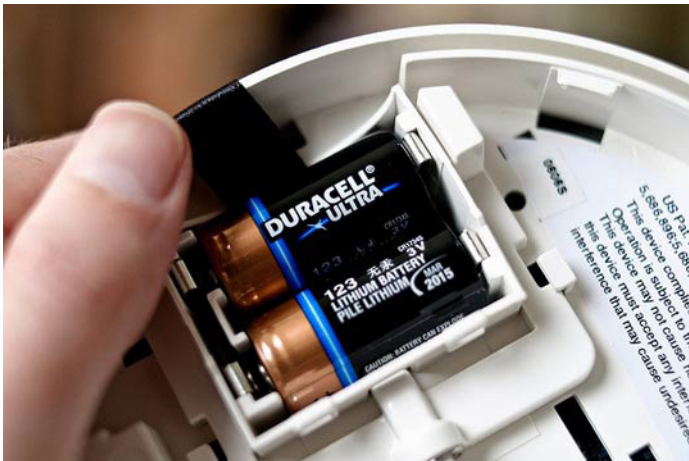
*UDCA Membership Committee*

# Smoke Detectors and Christmas

As fall wound down the holiday season crept in, the weather turned cold and our schedules all got a little busier. Space heaters came out of storage and holiday decorations got put up. Is that all you need to do to prepare for the holidays?

Every year we have some sort of fire tragedy in the city, including deaths, which could have been prevented by functioning smoke detectors. One of the easiest things you can do to prepare for the holidays is protect your family by inspecting and changing the batteries in your smoke detectors. Every year smoke detector batteries should be changed regardless of whether the low battery indicator is beeping or not. One very easy thing to do is make this part of your holiday preparation ritual. When the tree goes up the batteries get changed. It's Just that simple. Don't celebrate Christmas? Then make an association with another holiday and make this part of that holiday's rituals. Whatever you do-- don't enter the winter heating season without putting fresh batteries in and testing your smoke detectors.

Working smoke detectors save lives and allow for earlier response by the fire department so please make sure yours work, that you have enough of them in the right locations, and that they have fresh batteries every year. For more information, check the manufacturer's website or NFPA.org.



# The Grinch Who Stole Christmas

by John Autrey, President, University District Security Patrol

Our neighborhood has experienced several delivery thefts in October. During November and December, the number of thefts always seem to increase as the number of internet orders for holiday gift giving increases. Most packages are delivered directly to your door—even if no one is home to accept them.

Unfortunately, this is also the time of year that brings those out who are looking for crimes as opportunity, as well as criminals that actually target delivery trucks. Thieves will follow or watch delivery service trucks and target a home after a delivery is made. To reduce the chances of being victimized by package delivery thieves, the Detroit Police Department offers the following advice:



- **Chose a shipping option that requires you to sign for delivery.**
- **Check delivery status online so you can try to be home when the package arrives. Some retailers offer text messages to your cell phone to alert you when items have been delivered.**
- **On the expected day of delivery, leave a note asking that the delivery driver leave your package with a trusted neighbor.**
- **Arrange to have your package shipped to another location like your workplace or a friend or relative.**
- **Ask the delivery service to hold your package for customer pickup at a local facility.**

If you do not receive your shipment on time, check with the company of origin and confirm the delivery. If the item was delivered and you did not receive it, report the theft or loss to the original company, the shipping company, the Detroit Police Department (313-596-1200), and UD Security (313-447-0003) so that the information can be disseminated to the rest of the community. Reporting these minor crimes is essential for Security and Police to target Hot Spots and their success in proactive policing rather than reactive crime fighting.

Many of these crimes happen during broad daylight. As always, be alert about suspicious behavior in your neighborhood, **especially** if you see a vehicle or unknown subjects on foot, following a delivery truck vehicle. If you see a crime in progress, call 911.

**Remember: Thieves look for “targets of opportunity.” These are some of the things you can do to avoid being a victim.**



# Holiday Decorating Contest



Join the block captains in celebrating the holiday season as we light the night in 2015. Display your best holiday lighting and decorations this season and your home could be featured online and in our next newsletter! Decorate your house and our neighbors will be able to vote for their favorite display online! The top homes will receive prizes! Voting will take place December 21-31 and we'll announce the winners the first week of January!

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# Is Now the Time?

*Mary Jo Smith*

We as neighbors chose this neighborhood because of its atmosphere—the architecture, the schools, the churches, the location, the safety, the tranquility and other appealing factors. Many of the neighbors who have joined us recently share that sentiment often as they and their young children join us.

Some of the recent developments have changed our behavior, and thus the question: Is now the time to retool some of our responses? What about our definition of “neighborhood”? Let’s start with the challenges and changes. The housing crash led to lots of foreclosures, both mortgage and tax delinquencies. Those foreclosures brought a vacancy rate unlike anything seen since [maybe] the Great Depression. Prices have crashed and risen again. The continuing tax auctions yield some peculiar results and on-site arguments about property ownership. Speculators have added their marks of blight. Reckless driving seems to have increased and we have witnessed bizarre accidents and the horrible, heartbreaking death of a young child. As Halloween Saturday and this issue’s deadline coincided, we saw people start putting yard waste and bulk trash items curbside—two weeks in advance of the pickup, and the day after the previous scheduled collection. Unrestrained dogs continue to roam. New styles of electronic communication have become available and for many of us, social media are indispensable. Our crime rates, low for a big city, amazingly low for Detroit, continue to decline....and no, we won’t be relaxing our vigilance until crime disappears, since any crime is one too many. Nonetheless, some are panicking about the “rampant dangers.”

So here we are with many of the big issues disappearing, a new vibrancy in the neighborhood, crime continuing to fall, and options available to address some of the sticking points. Some answers, easy to propose, seem to fall on deaf ears. What would get us to do better? We know safety improves with front porch lights on at night...we could do better lighting the night. We know Courvilles are emptied each Thursday, and recycling picked up alternate Thursdays—the same week as the Friday bulk and yard waste in season—how can we keep our days straight?



The neighborhood has a very high literacy rate, but we seem unable to read and comprehend “STOP” in white letters on red signs, and certainly can’t match 25 on the street sign to 25 on our speedometers—how do we get those matches? Cars on the street are the ones stolen or vandalized--but even people with driveways and garages consistently park on the street. If we suffer an incident, we express our concern and anguish, but often omit making any report to the police or to our patrols which greatly reduces options for resolution or prevention of further incidents. Early in the fall there were some situations in the neighborhood where neighbors engaged in self-help with guns, brandishing or using them, when other options might well have gotten them better, safer responses, certainly with less jeopardy, both legal and physical, than their choice[s] to use guns—what say we look seriously at the new whistle safety program rolled out elsewhere in this issue as a new benefit of UDCA membership? “Gentrification” of a sort has arrived in our area—are we ready for some of those market alterations?

Radio Patrol works as eyes and ears for the police department. Additionally we volunteer to collect and collate suggestions. We volunteer to host any desired discussion. We know we will all be better served with porch lights on at night, reporting [to police and/or patrols] any incidents, keeping active block clubs where you know names and contact information for your block, supporting the work of Traffic Calming and Residential Standards committees of the community association, but what else? Do we need more than newsletter, emails, phone numbers for our neighborhood organizations? If so, what? Crime prevention or problem solving seminars? Those receptions to meet new neighbors seem well received...What is your conclusion on any fine tuning we need to get/keep the neighborhood we want?

You may reach Radio Patrol at 313-447-0003 before 8:00PM or at [radiopatrol@udradio-patrol.org](mailto:radiopatrol@udradio-patrol.org)

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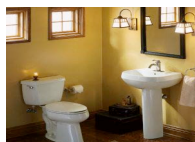
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• Handsome signs identifying our community
• Most of all, the satisfaction of being a part of the stabilization of your most valuable asset – HOME.

Interested in supporting the UDCA? Please check the area(s) that best suit your interest:

- Communications- Newsletter, Website, Outreach
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 Neighborhood Booster- Historic Designation, Residential Standards, Bi-annual Home & Garden Tour,
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 Social- Neighborhood Garage/Yard Sale, Dinner Dance, Family Activities, Youth Projects
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Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Year you moved into the neighborhood \_\_\_\_\_

UDCA Resident Contract Information (Fill in for at least one resident- Please PRINT)

Table with 4 columns: First Name, Last Name, Cell Phone, Email. Multiple empty rows for data entry.

Amount Submitted: \$ \_\_\_\_\_  Check # \_\_\_\_\_  Money Order # \_\_\_\_\_  Other \_\_\_\_\_

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The University District strives to maintain and support the integrity of the neighborhood, provide communication of events and issues to its residents, promote a quality education in our local schools while maintaining health, safety, and happiness in a family friendly diverse community.

Join our mailing list at [www.udcaonline.com](http://www.udcaonline.com)