



Greenbelt Homes, Inc.

# COMMUNICATOR

Monthly Publication of the Communications Committee



## Pilot Program Nears Completion; Sets Stage for Member Vote on the Homes Improvement Program

By Steve Skolnik, President

Some seven years back, the Buildings Committee conducted a membership-wide survey about heating, comfort, and energy efficiency in our homes. Members responded with widespread dissatisfaction in these areas. So, we designed a Pilot Program with these goals:

- Reduce overall energy consumption and costs in the dwelling units;
- Improve member comfort and "livability";
- Emphasize use of sustainable, environmentally friendly energy sources, technologies, and products where economically feasible;
- Reduce overall life cycle costs, including preventive and corrective maintenance, for heating, cooling and domestic hot water systems;
- Minimize disruption to households as improvements are being made;
- Implement the program while maintaining the unique and historic character of the GHI homes.

The Pilot Program, five years old and nearing completion, is yielding information, experience, and learning for the co-op. We are using what we have learned from the Pilot Program to design our Homes Improvement Program. Some things we've learned include:

- Some frame home crawlspaces are in worse shape than we thought, with many failed sump pumps. Crawls must be inspected more often than previously. When this information surfaced, our General Manager Eldon Ralph, directed GHI staff to inspect all frame home crawlspaces by April 30 (to date, 93% have been inspected, on track for April completion); test all frame home sump pumps, and repair as needed (to date, 48.7% have been repaired or replaced and are operational); and permanently seal abandoned steam tunnel openings (to date, 53% have been completed).
- Ground and storm water incursion into crawlspaces is an important issue; in many areas, swales have been blocked or altered by members over time, and some downspouts and underground storm water pipes are clogged or damaged. Mr. Ralph directed staff to inspect the yards of all 1,600 homes to identify ground water problem areas; inspections are well underway, over 80% completed.
- Using spray foam insulating sealant in crawlspaces and attics may be problematic, potentially posing a health hazard to members.
- On block homes, exterior insulation and vinyl siding improves comfort and energy savings; this improvement 'pays for itself' in reduced energy bills. However, some members object to changing the historic appearance of block homes. A professional study found that insulating block homes from the inside is neither practical nor cost effective.
- On frame homes, adding insulation to exterior walls improves comfort and lowers bills, however the improvement does not 'pay for itself' in energy savings.

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Completed Pilot Program Units  
Photo credit: Lauren Cummings

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- Adding insulation to frame and brick home attics improves comfort and lowers bills, however the improvement does not 'pay for itself' in energy savings.
- Electric baseboard heaters are capable of heating GHI homes adequately, when properly sized, operated, and cleaned.
- Ductless heat pumps work well in GHI homes, however in very cold weather may need to be supplemented with baseboard heaters.

From information developed by the task force on crawl-spaces, the Board adopted a plan to test a "partially conditioned crawlspace" solution in two frame rows, and to improve two masonry row crawlspaces; this will help us determine installation challenges, effectiveness of selected solution, and actual costs.

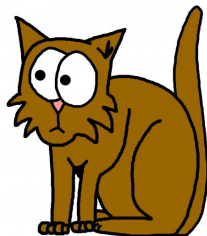
Homes Improvement Research Labs (H.I.R.L.) continues to collect temperature and humidity data in the pilot homes through the end of the heating season. Once completed, H.I.R.L. will write their final report on Pilot Program Phase 3 (Members can find earlier reports generated as work progressed at <http://ghi.coop/content/pilot-program>.) The final report will mark the completion of our Pilot Program; GHI hopes to continue our relationship with H.I.R.L., and will seek their assistance as we move into our Homes Improvement Program.

## Keeping Animals Out of Your Trash

By Mary Denise Smith

The annual raccoon population explosion is upon us, so here are a few tips for quieter nights and neater yards. Do not leave pet food out overnight, and clean up around bird feeders. Remove pizza crusts from the boxes before putting them out for recycling. If you must put wasted food in the trash, use a sturdy can with a lid that you can close tightly and secure. Bungee cords work well, and some cans come with clamps for the lids. Raccoons are smart and those little paws are amazingly adept at opening things. Deny access to raccoons by keeping crawl space ventilators firmly in place and hatches closed and locked. Call GHI if you suspect a critter invasion in your crawl space. There have been reports of rats in some Greenbelt neighborhoods. Report rats to GHI immediately by calling 301-474-4161, x127, and keep attractive food sources cleaned up.

**Pet Reminder:** County law and GHI rules require members to be in control of their companion animals at all times. When off the guardian's or custodian's property, companion animals must be on a leash. This includes cats. For more information about the issues with free-roaming cats, see the insert with this issue.



WHAT'S HAPPENING		
<i>Unless otherwise noted, meetings are held at the GHI Administration Offices on Hamilton Place, and are open to all GHI members. Dates are subject to change.</i>		
May		
2	11:00 am	Pre Purchase Orientation
5	7:30 pm	Candidates Forum (City Office)
7	7:30 pm	Board Meeting
8	--	OFFICE CLOSED*
10	--	Woodlands Committee Booth @ Farmers' Market
11	7:00 pm	Member Outreach Committee
11	7:30 pm	Marketing Committee
12	7:30 pm	Historic Preservation Taskforce
13	7:00 pm	Nominations and Elections
13	7:30 pm	Architectural Review Committee
14	7:00 pm	Annual Membership Meeting & Elections
15	7-10am, 5-8pm	Polls Open @ GHI Admin Building
17	12-3 pm	GHI Open House
18	7:00 pm	Pre Purchase Orientation
19	7:30 pm	Companion Animal Committee
20	7:00 pm	Woodlands Committee
21	7:30 pm	Board Meeting
22	--	OFFICE CLOSED
25	--	OFFICE CLOSED - MEMORIAL DAY
27	7:00 pm	Buildings Committee
* Emergency maintenance service is available outside of normal hours or when GHI is closed. Call 301-474-6011.		

## Member Announcements

### ANNUAL MEETING

Thursday, May 14, 2015

7:30 pm (Check in begins at 7:00 pm)

Greenbelt Community Center Gym

### 2015 Community Beautification Program

Annual inspections begin this month. Details of the program and what is expected can be found on the enclosed insert.

### Update to the Members' Handbook

Section XI. Exterior Paint – Paragraph B, number 2.

Please remove pages identified as 64-09/65-09 and replace it with insert 64-14/65-09.

### Answers to Your Homes Improvement Program Questions

Members may submit questions regarding the Homes Improvement Program to [hip@ghi.coop](mailto:hip@ghi.coop). If you do not have access to email, please submit your written questions to the GHI offices at 1 Hamilton Place, c/o Sheri Swaim. Staff will respond to your questions within 5 business days.