

Ghent Business Association Member Update June 19, 2006

It's been awhile since members have received a newsletter via either snail mail or email. This update will be posted on the GBA website and updated periodically. See www.DestinationGhent.com. The initial newsletter will also be mailed to non-members to let them know what's happening and why they should join GBA.

If you are a member but didn't receive this newsletter by email, we don't have your current email address. SEND AN UPDATE TO JOBRIEN155@COX.NET.

Ghent Market Study: At GBA's request, the City has hired specialists to look at the broad economic and market issues affecting Ghent and its business community. The current study finished the fact finding stage in May and an initial report is expected in late June or early July. A final report is expected by late summer.

New Residents in Ghent: The apartments on the site of the old Mary Jane Bakery are rapidly nearing completion and will have their first occupancy in this summer. The new residents are the first of over several hundred new units in Ghent and over two thousand on Norfolk's West side. GBA is distributing marketing materials from member businesses to these new residents. GBA unique bags will be available in late June. If you want to make coupons or other marketing materials available for the new residents, contact Jim O'Brien at jobrien155@cox.net. Initially, we are asking that 200 sets of coupons/etc be made available. Please keep the materials to a minimum size wise.

The Annual Flag Day Picnic was held Saturday, June 17th from 5 PM-dusk at Upper Stockley Gardens. Flags were planted Saturday morning by volunteers from GBA and the Boy Scouts. A very large crowd was in attendance with more children than ever. The catering team from Gene Walters' Marketplace was spectacular. POC Elena Berry (625-6161) or Jim Owens (640-8233).

Membership Meetings are held the first Thursday of each month, normally at the Chrysler Museum Theatre. They begin at 8:15 AM with coffee and sweets. At 8:30 AM we try to begin the meeting in the Theatre so we can finish by 9:30 AM if possible. There will be no meeting in July. If you as owner or manager cannot attend, it is beneficial to have someone from your organization attend. Information on new events is available at these meetings. Don't be in the dark about what's happening in Ghent. We are looking for sponsors. Individual members who sponsor a meeting have the opportunity to provide a ten minute presentation to the audience. Call Susan Pilato (623-7760 ,x91) for more information.

First Fridays in Ghent: If you were in Ghent on Friday, June 2nd in the evening, you saw lots of unusual activity in the business district. Over 20 retailers kept their doors open until 9 PM to welcome the increased visitors attracted through GBA's Marketing Team's effort. Newspaper articles in the Pilot and Portfolio and a TV spot on Norfolk Perspectives (Ch. 48) attracted a number of extra customers to Ghent. Quite a few retailers reported increased activity and some said that merchandise was flying off the shelves. If you are a retailer, you should be involved. If you have a non-retail business, consider working with a retailer to provide an attractive promotion to draw more customers to Ghent at a time when shops are normally closed.

We will continue First Fridays in Ghent throughout the year and include it in the Holiday Promotions. Please contact Ronda Baucom 625-1666 or via email

Norfolk@colormemine.com if you would like to get involved or need more information.

New GBA Website: www.DestinationGhent.com is being completely revamped and will be available in late June or early July. The new website will allow members to maintain their own membership information through their unique password. It will allow visitors to see in greater detail what products our members have and will allow our members to be more proactive in letting their customer base know what is happening both in Ghent as a whole and at a specific retailer's store. We believe that the new website will allow the membership to leverage their own website if they have one via GBA's and improve their market penetration. Matt Bakey (628-8324, x101)

Holiday Marketing Promotion: GBA Marketing is working with local media to create a marketing campaign that will develop Ghent's own brand awareness in the early Fall and then focus on individual retailer promotions as the Holiday Season approaches. We expect sponsorships will reduce the cost to individual retailers substantially. Board members who have heard the concept are really excited about the potential, especially the smaller retailers who can't afford TV or radio advertising. More is to come soon on this exciting promotion. Contact Ken Suddith (353-6063) for more information.

Ghent Guide: A new Ghent Guide is now available. If you need some, contact Claus Ihlemann at Decorum for pickup. We expect to recreate Ghent Guide into two variations: one will be for our customer base and include a listing of all members; the second will be for visitors to Norfolk who might not be too interested in professional services but who are definitely interested in great shopping and restaurants. More to come in this Fall. Talk to a Board member for more information.

Crosswalk Signs: The new signs were a big hit when they were put on Colley, and the City has been bombarded by requests for signs from other areas of Norfolk. Unfortunately, they quickly began to be damaged and to disappear. We understand that they will return and that periodic replacements will be budgeted. If you have a question, please ask your City Council members (Barclay Winn {494-1400} and Theresa Whibley) or Mayor Paul Fraim (664-4679).

Graffiti continues to be a problem. City code now requires graffiti to be removed within five days of notice by the City. Owners and occupants are responsible for removal. If it isn't removed within five days, the City will contract for removal and bill the owner/occupant. The City indicates that the real solution is rapid removal of the graffiti. If it is removed within 24 hours, it almost never comes back. If not, the "artist" will return again and again to demonstrate his or her abilities. And others will follow. Clean it up quickly and it is much easier to control. Contact John Morsberger at City Codes (john.morsberger@norfolk.gov).

Landscaping: The City continues to enforce landscaping standards at commercial properties. They will cite businesses who don't maintain properties. Weeds and litter continue to be the focus area. It makes sense to show some pride in your landscaping. After all, won't a clean, attractive surrounding attract more customers to your stores? Contact John Morsberger at john.morsberger@norfolk.gov.)

Crime: There continues to be a focus on panhandling and petty crimes. If you experience panhandling, call the Norfolk Police Department at 911 and report it. The same is true if an employee or customer experiences any type of theft. Report it. Often we hear about crimes that aren't reported to the Police. Please report everything. The squeaky wheel really does get the grease and in this case the grease is a safer Ghent. Use 911 to report crimes. Ghent Police liason is Officer Gilda Klein at [636-3196](tel:636-3196)/glidalkein@norfolk.gov

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