

# TACOMA WEEKLY



## YOUNG ADULT HOUSING COMES TO NORTH END

In Tacoma's constant need for more affordable housing, young people can get left out of the picture of all who need such housing. For those just leaving high school to attend a university, a trade school, community or technical college, join the military or jump right into the workforce, a lot of them are starting out on the lower end of the income bracket. Young adults who want to move out of their parents' home and get their lives going on their own have limited options for finding a place to live that they can afford with studio apartments in Tacoma going for an average of at least \$1,350 a month.

This is part of what is driving Julie and Andrew Cain to step in and do something about it. The couple recently purchased the church building and property at 2213 N. Warner St. and are in the process of remodeling it into a group home for what is anticipated to be about 40 residents between the ages of 18-26. Rent costs will be about half of current market prices.

On Feb. 22, City of Tacoma Planning and Development Services held a public information meeting on the project at which Julie explained why she and her husband are committed to bringing Amici House to the north end.

"We are passionate about investing in the next generation. We had help from the older generations when we were young adults and we are grateful for that. We feel like it is the culmination of our careers and lives and service that have brought us here to this place and this model. That's why we're doing this," she said.

Between them, the Cains have decades of experience with youth and in the real estate market. Julie has been working in commercial real estate development and management for two decades and has been a youth soccer coach for over 30 years. Andrew has been a school administrator for more than 20 years and is the principal at Cedar Heights Middle School in Port Orchard.

Julie said that in speaking with youth, she and



The Warner Street property has been on the market for several years as it became clear that its days as a church have ended.

Andrew heard repeatedly what young people want and need in their early adulthood.

"First is community but not just a community of friends. This next generation is passionate about purpose so community with purpose we heard again and again. The second thing was mentorship - adults older than them who had walked before them - to live life with them and be in community with them on a regular basis, helping them connect with jobs and careers and friendships," she said.

The third was affordability. "We heard stories from young adults that it's really hard for them to move out of their parents' home. We all know that housing prices and interest rates have skyrocketed, and the cost of living is high for people just starting out on their own."

The Cains chose to purchase the Warner Street church because it lends itself well to their plans.

"It was built to gather and serve. It's a perfect layout

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## MORE SAFE STREETS BLOCK WATCHES FORMING

Among its work helping to make communities safer, clean and healthy, Tacoma Safe Streets encourages the formation of neighborhood block watch groups organized and led by the people who live there. This is in keeping with what Tacoma Police Chief Avery Moore consistently tries to instill in Tacoma residents, that officers cannot do it by themselves, so it takes community engagement to effectively fight crime across the city.

To date, there are about 40 Safe Streets neighborhood groups in Tacoma and new ones come together frequently. North Franklin Neighborhood Safe Streets is one of the most recent. After forming this past November, the group held its third meeting on March 18 at its chosen location, the Salvation Army Citadel Corps on South Puget Sound Avenue. It drew an attendance of at least 25 residents from within the group's boundaries: South 6th to South 12th street and South Alder/Cedar Street to Union.

The incentive to form North Franklin Neighborhood Safe Streets came following a scary incident at John and Carolyn Platt's home. Recently, Carolyn was there alone and sleeping when she was awakened by a mumbling sound.

In John Platt's Tacoma Weekly column "Rudy Round Town," he recounts what his wife told police about the events of that evening.

"I was asleep when I heard mumbling from my husband's side of the bed. At first, I thought it was him. Suspicious, I pretended to be asleep. I spied an intruder through my lowered eyes. Concentrating, I wanted to try and remember every detail. A small, disheveled, thin man in a dark jacket was at the foot of my bed mumbling gibberish. I lay still, but when he started to straighten the sheets on my side of the bed, I thought this had gone too far! I jumped up and in my best stern teacher's voice I said, 'Can I help you?'"

Carolyn said the man froze and she bolted past him, leaving the door open as an easy out for the in-



Safe Streets Mobilization Specialist Darren Pen (right) stressed the importance of neighborhoods displaying the city's Vision Zero signs.

truder. He stole a few things and stumbled away through an alley. John, and police, came to Carolyn's aid quickly. She was unharmed physically, but the encounter left a lasting impression on the Platts' peace of mind.

The couple moved to Tacoma from Alameda, Calif., in 2020 to help with their daughter's new baby. Carolyn said she misses the sense of security in the closely-knit neighborhood where she and John lived, and she wants to bring that to where they live now.

"We're relatively new here and we really would like to get to know our neighbors," she told the Tacoma

Weekly. "We were so lucky in California. We lived on a lot where there was this couple and their kids and they were the foundation. Everybody went to their Christmas party, we raised our kids together, we tried to fix our old houses together... That's one of the things we miss, our friends there."

The Platts connected with their neighbor, Chuck Jensen, who is also relatively new to the neighborhood after moving there from the Proctor District. He suggested contacting Safe Streets.

"John came to me and said we needed to get a block watch or something going here, and I knew Safe Streets was active in Tacoma so why don't we contact them?" Jensen said.

The Platts and Jensen were already aware of the car thefts and vandalism in their neighborhood, and they wanted to do something about it. This is where Safe Streets Senior Community Mobilization Specialist Darren Pen came in to help them get a block watch going. As with all newly forming neighborhood Safe Streets groups, those who are leading the group formation must first decide on a suitable meeting location in their neighborhood and decide how often they want to meet - bi-weekly, monthly, bi-monthly, etc. Then they put together a flyer to distribute to their neighbors to spread word of the group's intentions and the meeting place and time. North Franklin Neighborhood Safe Streets members distributed more than 300 flyers and do so prior to each meeting. After a while, meetings can be advertised on social media.

"So many times, we get positive feedback," John said about their leafleting expeditions. "Carolyn met some people who are older, one woman taking care of her husband with dementia and a frail elderly lady living by herself, and these are people for us to keep an eye on."

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# COVER STORY: MORE SAFE STREETS BLOCK WATCHES FORMING

Meeting neighbors like this may not have happened were it not for the catalyst of Safe Streets, and this is the beauty of it.

“My personal hope is that we get to know each other better, not just the guy next door or across the street necessarily but everyone on the block,” Jensen said. “By doing that, we naturally are going to watch out for one another.”

At a first meeting of a new block watch group, Pen gives a “Block Watch 101” training. “We want to have a core group of people to understand what a neighborhood watch is and how to do it,” he said.

After that, the group takes ownership of setting agendas and forming committees. For example, North Franklin has identified several priorities: walkabouts through neighbor-

hoods to chat with neighbors and pick up trash, neighbors helping neighbors, and organizing for this summer’s National Night Out and other block parties.

Pen is an invaluable resource to bring in city officials, law enforcement, and government leaders to engage in conversations at meetings, which he excels at since he is very well known and already has these important connections.

“If you don’t know them, it can be hard to get them to come,” as Pen explained. “We invite them to come to you instead of you calling them with a complaint. It is action driven and not complaint driven.”

Pen is there to offer direction and advice when appropriate. He visits meetings regularly across the city every month.

“I need to know what the



Safe Streets Health is Wealth participants were invited to visit city council.

groups need,” he said. “Being a group leader can take a lot of time and I don’t want them to burn out, so I tell them to tell me whatever they need. That’s my job. They have a job Monday through Friday and sometimes they have children to take care of.”

### CALL 311

At the North Franklin group’s March 18 meeting, Tacoma Transportation Commission member Richard Gardner was there to talk about vehicles speeding through neighborhoods and how residents can take action to help stop it. One way is to call the city’s 311 non-emergency number, the best resource for reporting everything from suspicious people in the neighborhood to speeding drivers. Pen said it’s also important to place the city’s Vision Zero signs along neighborhood streets to remind drivers of the city’s default speed limit of 20 miles per hour on residential roads. These yard signs can be picked up at the Tacoma Municipal Building Customer Service Center at 747 Market St.

“This sign is what it’s all about. It’s very important to put it somewhere in your neighborhood,” Pen said. “If I was a speeder in your neighborhood, when you put this up, I would notice that I’m speeding. It’s a little bit to change people’s mentality and it takes time.”

If drivers continue to ignore

the signs, Pen advises to call 311 and use the to-the-point terminology such as “public safety is at risk.”

City officials often attend Safe Streets groups in their districts. Tacoma City Council member Kristina Walker, who lives in the North Franklin Safe Streets area, talked to the gathering on March 18. She advised to “311 everything. It is so valuable.”

“Vision Zero is really central to keeping people safe on our streets. It’s something I care deeply about. I have kids so when we’re talking about those cars speeding, I care about that personally,” she said. “Those data points get looked at when there are 20, 50, 75 comments. Anytime we look at data about where we’re going to put the next bike lane or pedestrian crosswalk, we’re looking at where the most crashes are and at community feedback so those calls really do matter.”

Also speaking at the North Franklin meeting were Pierce County Deputy Prosecutor Scott Peters, who discussed the rise in juvenile crimes including car thefts, and three Tacoma Police Department Community Liaison Officers (CLOs) who gave an update on calls they responded to in the neighborhood. CLOs visit Safe Streets groups in neighborhoods across the city to hear directly from residents.

Neighbors who attend their

local Safe Streets meetings can learn about a host of city resources and services through invited guests that work in city departments. Next month for the North Franklin meeting on April 18, Pen has lined up representatives from the Tacoma FIRST 311 non-emergency line and code enforcement department to give a presentation and engage in discussion.

Safe Streets groups take part in neighborhood events or organize their own. For example, North Franklin will be hosting a clean-up at Franklin Park during the Litter Free 253 community clean up event on April 20. The group is also planning for its first National Night Out on Aug. 6. This is a very fun outing for neighbors to pull up a lawn chair, enjoy hamburgers and hot dogs on the grill, meet with visiting community liaison officers and watch their kids play together.

Pen has been an involved community mobilizer for more than 30 years. He worked with the Hilltop Action Coalition for 10 years then came to Safe Streets nearly 20 years ago.

“I see the power of citizens coming together then they aren’t complaint driven, they’re action driven. They say, ‘What do we want to do next?’ and they get involved. This is the power of people engaging in discussion and making decisions for the next approach,” he said.

There is much more that Tacoma Safe Streets has to offer the community. Youth Leading Change is for students in middle and high schools to come together to identify issues and take action for change. The Health is Wealth program is for students in 6th-11th grade to build community networks, learn about financial literacy, meal planning, and more. Discover everything Safe Streets does for Tacoma at safest.org.

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- Religion - Monks Chanting
- Fresh Fruit and Senior Boat Parade with Chai Pom
- Taste of Asia featuring Cambodia
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- Cooking contest - Bok La Heng (Papaya salad)
- Dessert Dash
- Silent Auction
- Food Booths, Retail Vendors
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## WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH 2024

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The Leadership of The Making a Difference Foundation celebrate **Women's History Month** and the "Women Who Advocate for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion."

	
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