

# In the News...

## Redeveloping West Lake Avenue: First of an occasional series

By Steven Froias

**Editor's Note:** As the West Lake Avenue Redevelopment plan unfolds, the Ocean Grove Record will periodically be running stories chronicling the process and progress of the project. This is the first article in the series.

NEPTUNE - "Come on over," is the message Joseph V. Palazzolo, Stephanie Brunson and Gail L. Oliver are sending from the newly opened information center manned by representatives of CityWorks and the Midtown Urban Renaissance Corporation (M.U.R.C.) respectively on West Lake Avenue.

The information center is designed to be an interactive part of West Lake Avenue Redevelopment as it moves forward. Area residents are encouraged to drop into the office to learn more about the project, discuss ideas and offer opinions.

The Record visited on a recent Friday afternoon and chatted with Joe Palazzolo and Gail Oliver about what the place has to offer.

Adorning the walls are conceptual drawings of the completed project, as well as photographs from West Lake, as well as Springwood (its Asbury counterpart) Avenues during their last heyday.

"That's what this area was," Gail Oliver remembers, "And that's what we want to make it again."

CityWorks is the designated redeveloper for the West Lake Avenue project. M.U.R.C. is their partner - and designated memory.

"We're here to connect the pieces," Oliver says. "Many of us remember West Lake and Springwood Avenues as it was in those pictures. It's integral that we're here as a neighborhood group."

"You have to know the past to know how to move forward," she concludes.

The vibrancy depicted in the photos is unmistakable, a vibrancy that can exist once again insists CityWorks' Palazzolo.

"I did a traffic study last summer of this corner," he says gesturing out the information office window. "The numbers were amazing - I was amazed at how many cars were passing through here each day. There's quite a bit more interest here than people think."

The West Lake Avenue redevelopment project seeks to harness that vitality into a new urban core that will encompass a residential and retail mix. The goal is to recreate for the 21st century the infrastructure that used to exist on these blocks. Construction is expected to start sometime this spring, according



Joseph Palazzolo and Gail Oliver outside of the West Lake Avenue Information Center. Record photo.

**"You have to know the past to know how to move forward."**

to Joe.

Here's the outline of the project from [www.neptune.ecityworks.com](http://www.neptune.ecityworks.com):

Years ago, West Lake Avenue was one of the premier commercial corridors of Neptune Township. Economic vitality and quality of life can be restored to the neighborhood, but it's going to take vision and commitment. With the Neptune Township Committee and Mayor, the Midtown Urban Renaissance Corporation (MURC), and CityWorks on board, and with crucial input from the local community, the revitalization of West Lake Avenue can become a reality.

The plan began to unfold on July 11, 2005, when a dilapidated building located at 1507 West Lake Avenue, near the corner of Myrtle Avenue, was demolished. Subsequently, CityWorks was designated the official redeveloper by the Neptune Township Committee.

The Information Center's hours are: Monday thru Friday (8:00 to 10:00 am), Monday, Wednesday, Thursday (4:00 to 6:00 pm), Tuesdays (4:30 to 6:30 pm), and Fridays (2:00 to 6:30 pm). The center is located at 1716 West Lake Avenue, Neptune, NJ 07753 - (P.O. Box 337, Neptune, NJ 07754). Their phone number is 732 - 775 - 1110.

### About CityWorks

CityWorks is a not-for-profit corporation that was created to assist non-profit organizations, like MURC, in developing commercial and residential real estate projects in economically-distressed, urban neighborhoods throughout New Jersey. CityWorks can assist non-profits with land use and site planning, financing, market analysis, project construction and business tenant recruiting.

The New Jersey Economic Development Authority (EDA) has made a financial commitment to CityWorks. Three foundations, the Fund for New Jersey, the Garfield Foundation and the Surdna Foundation, have also invested. The EDA, the Fund for New Jersey and the Garfield Foundation are represented on the CityWorks' Board of Trustees.

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