

## GREAT NEIGHBORHOODS



Parchment and old-style lettering represent the history of Pigtown as part of a mural at Archer Street and Washington Boulevard. — Photos by Kevin J. Parks/For The Examiner.

# Pigtown conserves and celebrates history

By Terri Kearns  
Examiner Correspondent

Pigtown's pride can be likened to that of a city for its local sports team. Pig statues and murals adorn the shops along Washington Boulevard (Main Street), where Pigtown's Main Street Program hosts pig-themed parties and festivals throughout the year. The neighborhood is bordered by Martin Luther King Boulevard to the east, Monroe Street to the west, Russell Street to the south and the B&O Railroad to the north.

Sure, residents enjoy a convenient location and affordable homes. But it's their incredibly diverse and cohesive community that makes it home.

"There's just something innate, whether you've been there a month or generations, [that inspires residents] to retain what makes it unique," said Jack Danna, Pigtown Main Street Program coordinator.

"The common theme is how do we make Pigtown even stronger and greater? How do we retain the diversity and uniqueness? We're not about being gentrified, but about being revitalized," he said.

It's that sheer determination that

seven-year resident Carol Ott loves. "If you're going to come here, come ready to be part of the community," she said. She is also the owner of Evelyn's Coffee Shop at 784 Washington Blvd.

Being part of the community starts with being proud of the name. Baltimore City renamed Southeast Baltimore "Washington Village" as part of an urban renewal project in the 1980s. These days, bumper stickers rejecting that moniker are proudly displayed. Neighbors look for the name "Pigtown" to be reinstated this year.

Despite occasional poor publicity, Pigtown has always boasted above-average homeownership rates (63 percent), beating the citywide average of 50.3 percent, according to Danna. "It's really never been a neighborhood that has been down and out," he said. "It was a neighborhood that suffered. It had issues, it had crime, but it wasn't that far gone."

Housing conditions and prices vary. There are cases where newly renovated homes sit next door to dilapidated shells, but the majority of homes fall between these two extremes.

"There's really just a mixture in the homes over here," said Debbie

Kuper, Remax agent with The Krach/Kuper Team. "They're all Baltimore City row homes. Some are two-story, some are three-story. The midprice range is \$200s to \$250,000."

Affordability coupled with convenience to city life, Interstate 95 and the MARC train makes Pigtown appealing to young homebuyers. Kuper sells to a lot of medical students from the nearby hospitals and universities and also to a large population from D.C.

"There are a lot of young professionals here, a lot of single buyers with roommates," she said.

It's also great for families. George Washington Elementary in Pigtown was just named a Maryland Blue Ribbon School of Excellence by State Superintendent of Schools Dr. Nancy Grasmick. There's an Enoch Pratt Library branch right on Main Street, and the Science Center and Aquarium are just a few blocks east toward the Inner Harbor.

"It's a nice family neighborhood," said Ott, who moved from D.C. right before her son was born. "Our son loves it here. We belong to the Science Center and the Otterbein swim club."

"I can't imagine living anywhere else," Ott said. "We're here for the long haul."



Pigtown is known for its murals. This mural on the end of a row house at the corner of Scott and Ramsay streets gives the illusion of the street being continued.