

Thousands sought to join hands along Woodward

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Imagine a line of people stretching hand-in-hand from the Detroit River to Pontiac.

That sight is planned to become reality on Sunday, Sept. 2, 2007, as the Hands Along Woodward event is held as part of the 200th birthday celebration for Woodward Avenue.

That day will open with a "Blessing of the Byway," with churches along the 27-mile route taking part in a joint blessing ceremony, just before an estimated 90,000 people hold hands to symbolically link all the communities along Woodward.

"The Hands Along Woodward is our signature event," said Heather Carmona, executive director of the Association, familiarly known as WA3.

WA3 is spearheading the big birthday bash being planned for Woodward.

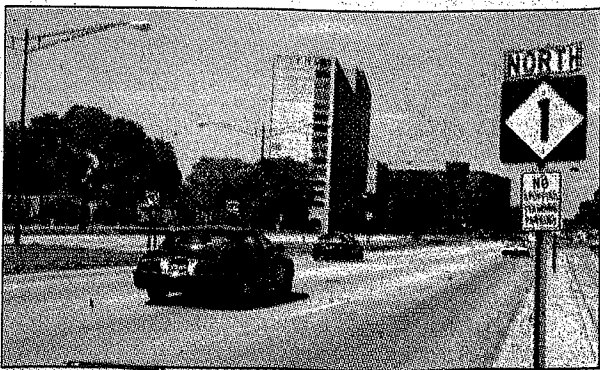
Carmona led a discussion of about 30 community representatives Monday morning at the Huntington Woods recreation center. The meeting was held to plan events for the 200th birthday. Activities will be focused on the week of Aug. 27, using the Woodward Avenue Dream Cruise on Aug. 18 as a lead-in for the official celebration. An announcement of events is planned for mid-July, around the 200th day of the year.

Activities planned include creating a Business Birthday Kit, with a poster and anniversary logo among other items. Also planned is a "Traveling Birthday Party" featuring a character representing Augustus Woodward, the man who created Woodward Avenue.

"Woodward is a very historic street," said Ron Gillham, mayor of Huntington Woods. He said it should be promoted and recognized for its significance.



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Woodward Avenue will celebrate its 200th anniversary next year.

WOODWARD

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Also being considered is a traveling exhibit that could be presented at various events throughout the year, ranging from the Winter Blast in downtown Detroit to the Dream Cruise, north of Eight Mile Road to Arts Beats and Eats in Pontiac.

"Every single community should feel they have a role in this," Carmona said.

Organizing events will be a

challenge as it is already December, and some events like the Hands Along Woodward will require great coordination. An estimated 150,000 people will be sought to participate, with an expected 90,000 to take part.

"It's a very good thing to recognize that anniversary," said John Heiney, executive director of the Birmingham Principal Shopping District. "Birmingham should participate."

Heiney said he will work with local businesses to see how they can become involved in the activities.

WOODWARD - THE MAN

If the Woodward Avenue Action Association does hire someone to portray the creator of Woodward Avenue, as is being considered, that person will have the role of a lifetime.

Augustus Brevoort Woodward was born in 1774 and died in 1827. He stood 6-foot-3, was thin, had a huge nose and was described later as the living image of Ichabod Crane from the "Legend of Sleepy Hollow."

He was a lawyer with a dismal practice, but wrote a series of pamphlets in Washington, D.C., on some aspects of democracy. He came to the attention of President Thomas Jefferson who appointed him chief justice of the Michigan Territory shortly after the great Detroit fire of 1805. He oversaw the rebuilding of the city including the creation of the road that bore his name.

After the War of 1812, Woodward left the state, eventually being named a judge in the Florida Territory, where he died.

Woodward was noted to hoist a few in the courtroom and was not afraid of a brawl. But he also was a brilliant legal scholar and a dedicated patriot.