

Woodmont Civic Association

Quarterly Newsletter July 2004

A Message from the President

The Washington metro area has experienced demographic expansion in excess of 16% during the last 10 years, making it the fastest growing metro area in the US. Within that area, Northern Virginia has expanded by about 25%. Yet Arlington County has grown by only 10%. It would have expanded faster, had there been more available land to use. This differential has induced high-density construction boom and rising real estate prices. In our own vicinity, the density of land use has risen as more homes were built on the same land.

Congestion and urban crowding have become a fact of American life. Our sense of space is shrinking. Studies in social psychology show increased stress with congestion. I have lived in the neighborhood since 1978, and can attest to increased tension. Last year, it was the bridge issue. This year it is group homes. Who knows what next year will bring!

The question is how we manage congestion: through strife or reconciliation. I have resisted calls for 'debating' these issues in the July WCA meeting. In my judgment, the debate would have inflamed feelings on both sides, without resolving much. I opted for the present format: use the Newsletter to inform WCA constituency of where each side stands. You will find "pro" and "con" statements about granting use permits for group homes in Woodmont on pages 2 and 3 of this issue. Neighbors may wish to express their views *directly* to the County Board. That is where arbitration of conflicting claims belongs, not WCA.

The statement against group homes comes from a group of neighbors who list their reasons to protect their interest. The statement for group homes comes from a tax-exempt faith-based entity that has been in the area for more than 25 years.

Two County officers came to the April 15th meeting to explain the rules for group living in residential neighborhoods. So such things do exist, and the criteria for their proper operations are within reach.

A Message from the President, continued

Are we willing to work with that and scrupulously monitor performance at group homes? Finally, how can we shape conditions for granting the requested use permits so that all parties can protect their interests?

--Naiem Sherbiny

WCA July Meeting Woodmont Center, Lower Level

The next Woodmont Civic Association meeting will be held on July 15, 2004 at 7:30 pm at the Woodmont Center, lower level. Agenda items include:

- Directory status
- Labor Day picnic?
- Nominating Committee for election of officers at October WCA meeting

Woodmont Civic Association

<http://www.geocities.com/woodmontca/>

Officers

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GROUP HOMES IN WOODMONT

The Cedars, 2145 N. 24th, has applied for use permits for their two group homes (2200 and 2224 N. 24th). There will be two occasions to discuss the issue in September: 9/7 at the Planning Commission and 9/18 at the County Board. The Planning Commission would like to get neighbors feedback by mid-August. To assist Woodmont neighbors, contributors with “pro” and “con” viewpoints were asked to submit 500-word statements. The “pro” statement is 553 words and the “con” statement is 500 words. The apparent difference in statement length results from format options selected by the contributors.

Any of the following means may be used to convey your opinion. In *writing* to: Arlington County Board, 2100 Clarendon Blvd, Suite 300, Arlington, VA 22201. By *telephone*: 703-228-3130; 703-228-7430 (FAX). By *Email*: countyboard@co.arlington.va.us. *Website*: www.co.arlington.va.us/cbo and click on "Meetings"

PRO	CON
The Fellowship Foundation became the owner of the home, located at 2200 North 24th Street, known as Potomac Point, on 25 October, 2002. The Cedars, which is also owned by the Fellowship Foundation, is used for a variety of functions related to the ministry of the Foundation. These activities were the subject of an investigation by Arlington County related to the tax exemption of the property, and it was determined that 100% of the property was exempted. We propose to house no more than 12 young women, similar to what has been done for many years. They are required to pay for their living expenses, but the Foundation will eliminate that cost if they are unable to pay. We have provided a copy of the admission's criteria and a list of the occupants, with a brief review of their individual backgrounds, to the immediate neighborhood of approximately 90 homes. We will also be committing to provide to these neighbors, and others, in the future, upon request, the names and backgrounds of the residents. Each resident is carefully screened prior to their being invited to live at Potomac Point, and it is our absolute intent that they will be both a credit to the work of The Cedars and the neighborhood. These young women are mentored in the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth on a daily basis. The residents of Potomac Point spend most of their working days at the adjacent Cedars property, where they assist the host couple and do much of the work	Why are some Woodmont neighbors opposed to granting dormitory permits to the Cedars? The Cedars has flouted the laws of the State and County and abused the trust and hospitality of Woodmont. Cedars guests speed on our roads and have committed felonies against neighbors. To learn more about the Cedars, its benefactors, and its dormitories, see a Harper's Magazine article at http://www.harpers.org/JesusPlusNothing.html. Many residents are opposed to granting the permits under <i>any</i> conditions. However, neighbors who feel that the dorms should be allowed to operate, may consider past behaviors as indicative of future behaviors and suggest their conditions accordingly. The following points should be noted: - Arlington County requires dormitory permits to legally operate group homes. For many years, the Cedars have illegally run dormitories in Woodmont. Prior to the existing dormitories, the Cedars itself was operated as a group home, without a use permit. They have only now applied for the required dormitory permits. - Four home burglaries occurred on 23rd Road and 24th Street last August. A Cedars dormitory resident was convicted of these crimes, which are felonies. While crime can occur anywhere, hosting transients in Woodmont increases the probability more crime will occur. - For years, neighbors have complained about Cedars group home residents and guests

PRO, continued	CON, continued
necessary to support the various activities that occur at the Cedars. The home for young men on North 24th Street is owned by the Wilburforce Foundation, but the function and criteria for admittance is the same as that for the young ladies at Potomac Point. In response to a recent problem related to four unauthorized entering into neighborhood houses by one resident, the background has been tightened to avoid any chance of a repeat of this type of activity. There are no “troubled” young men living there, and there has never been an intent to allow that to happen. We are working to expand our relationships with the neighborhood, and we would welcome any neighbor visiting either of the two houses to meet the young people who are living there. We believe that any person doing so will find it to be an enlightening experience, particularly when you consider some of the innuendo that has appeared. In that regard, we would also welcome anyone who would like to visit the Cedars and learn more about the work of the Fellowship Foundation. As we all know, life is full of individuals who create a negative environment through the distortion of the truth. This approach reinforces our strong feelings about making sure that all of our neighbors have an opportunity to learn as much as they desire about what we do. Some of the recent press that we have received has been reasonably accurate, such as the one written by Lisa Getter in the L.A. Times. However, others, such as the one in Harpers, have been full of inaccuracies. Again, we would like to provide all of neighbors with not only an accurate overview of the work of the Fellowship, but to do so on a very open and personal manner. -- Richard E. Carver, President Fellowship Foundation	speeding on 24th Street. Speed humps were installed in 2002 after County traffic engineering studies confirmed speeding was a problem; traffic volume exceeded 700 cars per day with an average speed exceeding 32 mph. The Cedars’ prayer breakfasts and other events draw many of these vehicles into Woodmont. (This study was conducted before Ft. Smith Park opened, and traffic concerns have since increased.) The permits ask for twelve residents per dormitory. In the past, each dormitory houses as many as 20 residents, adding up to as many as 40 vehicles to the parking and traffic problems on 24th Street. • Dormitory residents have ignored state and county laws. Everyone residing in the State of Virginia 30 days or longer must register his or her vehicle in Virginia. Vehicles “garaged” (regularly parked) in Arlington County must be registered for personal property tax. Residents of The Cedars group homes typically do neither. • The Cedars and its dormitories are tax-exempt. They do NOT pay Arlington County property taxes. They do not contribute to the upkeep of Arlington’s roads, parks, or other infrastructure (libraries, schools, etc.). In short, they take without giving back. • The Cedars usurped a public right of way at the end of 24th Street. Improvements benefiting only The Cedars were constructed on public property without the necessary building permits and in violation of Arlington County’s zoning code • Cedars-affiliated residents recently mobilized to vote non-Cedars residents out of Woodmont’s delegation to Arlington’s Federation of Civic Associations. Since their election, only one Cedars-affiliated delegate has shown up for a single meeting. Without active participation in FCA meetings, Woodmont will not be adequately represented on critical issues affecting our neighborhood such as airport noise abatement or Route 66 widening -- Contributions by several Woodmont neighbors, compiled by Barbara Feinman Todd

Woodmont Representatives and Alternates Elected to Civic Federation

At the April 15 meeting of the WCA, four representatives were elected to represent Woodmont Civic Association to the Arlington County Civic Federation. The elected representatives are Roy Cook, Art Lindsley, Sharon Rogers, and David Thacker. The four alternates elected are Michael Chellman, Norm Mosher, Lee Rooker and Bill Santry.

Amy Millen was elected as the Woodmont representative to the Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee.

Woodmont has four votes in the Civic Federation. In order to monitor the work of the Civic Federation and its committees, delegates and alternates will be organizing over the summer to subscribe to committee email lists. In this way, the delegates and alternates will be able to alert WCA officers and members about issues in which Woodmont may wish to have a voice. There are no Civic Federation meetings in July and August. The next Civic Federation meeting is September 7.

Any interested member of the Woodmont community may review the work of the Civic Federation at the website www.civfed.org.

How Green Is Your Home?

Woodmont builders and home owners can still participate in the Arlington Green Home Choice Program, incorporating environmentally friendly elements into their new or renovation properties. County staff offers support and resources to homebuilders who want to build "green" to obtain "Green Home Choice" certification from Arlington County. Green homes save money by reducing electric and natural gas bills by 30 percent or more, by reducing the need for air conditioning, and by economizing on water bills. The use of fewer natural resources can also reduce exposure to potential allergens and toxins. The program also features designing homes to reduce storm water runoff to help protect Arlington's streams, the Potomac River, and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay.

To learn more about the Green Home Choice program or obtain the services of a green builder, you can visit <http://www.co.arlington.va.us/des/epo/greenhome.htm> or call Joan Kelsch in the County's Department of Environmental Services at 703-228-3599. – Amy Millen

Arlington Prepares

The Woodmont Civic Association successfully participated in the June 5 Arlington County effort to distribute a packet of information about emergency preparedness to each household. Our success was only possible because the following neighbors were willing to take the time to distribute the packets: Harry Bacas, Sue Bentley, Stacy Brown, Sheila Conlin, Jim Edwards Barry and Kathy Kowalski, Norm Mosher, Dave Murphy, Stephen Nichols, Joe Ruth, Palma Strand, David Thacker (and children), Tom and Marcy Ubois, and Dave Wilson.

Arlington County will continue to invest in additional emergency preparedness strategies. All residents are encouraged to go to the County website (<http://www.co.arlington.va.us>) to sign up for ARLINGTON ALERT text messaging and email for emergency alerts. The County is also considering and has tested an AM radio alert system at 1700 AM.
– Sharon Rogers

Woodmont Directory

ATTENTION ALL WOODMONT RESIDENTS!

A copy of your information sheet is included with this copy of the newsletter. Please review the content and accuracy of the information and send corrections to Lynda Adamson at LGAdamson@earthlink.net or edit the form and deliver it to 2717 N. Fillmore. DEADLINE: July 8, 2004.

Woodmont residents are urged to seriously consider giving permission to include phone numbers and email addresses. In the past year such information has been needed to distribute details of new zoning requests on short notice. This task was made more difficult because phone numbers and email addresses were not available. Also, Arlington County's future work on disaster preparedness may ask communities to use email lists and/or telephone trees to distribute information in an emergency.

The directory will be distributed sometime in August 2004.