



# NORTHWOOD NEWS

PUBLISHED BIMONTHLY BY THE NORTHWOOD-FOUR CORNERS CIVIC ASSOCIATION ■ DECEMBER 2012

## The BRT, White Oak Master Plan, and the Future

By Jim Zepp

■ What would you do if the only ways to make left turns into or out of the neighborhood were at Southwood, Dennis, and Caddington?

■ Are you willing to subsidize the commutes of Up County and Howard County residents while only vague commitments are made to improve mass transit services in the Down County?

■ Would you be willing to accept more traffic congestion across the County as the price for faster bus service?

■ Would you be willing to accept more traffic congestion in our area as the price for more development on our side of the County?

■ Would faster bus service on Colesville Road and University Boulevard, with one-mile stops between stations, persuade you to not drive a car to get work; buy your weekly groceries; or get your children to school, day care, or to afterschool activities?

These are some of the questions facing our neighborhood's residents and those in much of the other Down-County communities as discussions on the configuration and extent of a bus rapid transit (BRT) system. It is proposed to cover 163 miles on 23 major roadways in the County and may cost \$2 to \$10 billion to construct and \$150 million or more a year to operate. A Transit Task Force appointed by County Executive Ike Leggett recommended this system in their report last June.

A BRT is a bus route on which special vehicles travel mainly on exclusive lanes outside regular traffic and have the ability to override red lights when approaching intersections. For maximum travel times, stations are far

apart (one plan has only five stations on Route 29 between Burtonsville and Downtown Silver Spring). To minimize  
*(continued on page 2)*

## Next Meeting on December 20th

The next meeting of the Northwood-Four Corners Civic Association will be held on Thursday, 20 December 2012, at 7:30 p.m. at Forest Knolls Elementary School. The school is located at 10830 Eastwood Avenue, just off Caddington Avenue. Come for the homemade treats and various items to be raffled!

All residents of the Northwood-Four Corners-Forest Knolls area are invited to attend and express their views. Please note that only paid members of the NFCCA are eligible to vote. (Annual dues are \$10 per household and may be paid at the meeting.)■

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I am sure we are all very thankful that we were spared the worst of hurricane Sandy's destruction. At the very least I was expecting protracted power outages, but, as far as I know, this entire neighborhood weathered Sandy with its lights on. However, a long, unpredictable winter is ahead of us and who can tell what surprises Mother Nature is planning? I am certain of one thing though: we have a great community spirit and we will help each other out no matter what's in store for us.

And talking about community spirit, if you haven't attended a civic meeting for a while, you have a chance to reverse this trend on Thursday, 20 December, at 7.30 p.m. at Forest Knolls Elementary School. See you there!

—Brian Morrissey

## The BRT, White Oak Master Plan

(continued from page 1)

the amount of land needed for a BRT, most stations would not have parking facilities, so riders would have to walk, take a bus, or get a ride to a BRT station.

(As reference points, the Metrorail system was estimated to cost \$1.8 billion in 1969; its ultimate construction cost in 2001 was \$10 billion. The 2010 operating budget for the entire MetroBus system for D.C., Md., and Va. was \$506 million, and the approved FY12 operating budget for the County's Ride-On bus system was \$86 million.) NOTE: Because the BRT's operational details—such as the number of stations and their locations; use of dedicated, specially constructed roadways vs. exclusive use of existing traffic lanes vs. shared traffic lanes; extent of the system and frequency of bus service; and the construction schedule that may range from a few to 30 years—are yet to be determined, it is difficult to precisely assess any impacts

and those which are known are subject to change as the proposed project continues to morph in complexity and scale.

However, what is known is that, for a BRT to operate at its highest efficiency, the stations must be far apart and everything must be done to allow its vehicles to travel faster than the surrounding normal traffic. In this sense, a BRT is similar to putting a rail transit system or HOV lanes down Route 29 in terms of right-of-way needs and priority over traffic lights and intersections. Also, like rail systems, HOVs, and other limited-stop conveyances, express transit systems mainly serve long-distance commuters and not densely settled neighborhoods in close-in, urbanized areas such as ours, where the availability and frequency of local bus service can determine the practicality of residents' mass transit usage.

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning  
(continued on page 8)

## Join One or Both Of the NFCCA's Two List Serves

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- Post a Message (you must subscribe first): [northwoodparents@yahoogroups.com](mailto:northwoodparents@yahoogroups.com) ■

## NORTHWOOD NEWS

*Northwood News* is published by the Northwood-Four Corners Civic Association. The NFCCA represents the ~1,485 households in the area bounded by Colesville Rd. (Rte. 29), University Blvd. (Rte. 193), Caddington Ave., and the Northwest Branch.

Any resident of this area is eligible to join the NFCCA. Annual dues are \$10 per household and may be paid at any Association meeting or mailed to the treasurer.

*Northwood News* is published five times a year—in October, December, February, April, and June. To place an ad or discuss a story, please contact the editor.

### Editor

Jacquie Bokow  
10603 Cavalier Drive  
Silver Spring, MD 20901  
301.593.8566  
[nfccca@verizon.net](mailto:nfccca@verizon.net)

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# High on Density, Low on Smarts

By Carole A. Barth

Many of us in Montgomery County feel like our communities are under attack from the County's push to massively increase densities while failing to maintain basic infrastructure and services for existing developed areas. In turn, planners and public officials criticize citizens for being resistant to change. We are admonished to give up our outmoded ideas of neighborhood and embrace the current one-size-fits-all "vision" of the future.

"Densify or Die" seems to be the message. Dump your kids, car, dogs, and other impedimenta so you can move into that loft or micro-efficiency in the town center. Quit the career you spent a decade training for, the business you've been building, or the public service you devoted your adult life to so you can get a job in the commercial space attached to your new building. (Can you say tall, venti, grande?)

"What's that I hear you say? What about your spouse's career teaching disadvantaged kids in a blighted neighborhood in a neighboring jurisdiction? Sorry, our vision does not encompass complexities such as families with commutes in different directions or even single people whose jobs and homes are not located along a simple straight line down a single transportation corridor."

My point is not that the fashion for high-density mixed use is necessarily bad; my point is that too often our

approach to this model of development is shallow, simplistic, and ultimately impractical. I'm reminded of classic science fiction illustrations where everybody in the city of the future sports the same haircut and identical lycra bodysuits. Real people and communities, however, tend to be much messier and more complex.

Nobody expected the sci-fi visionaries of the 1950s to actually create faster-than-light propulsion or reliable personal jet packs. Montgomery County residents, however, do have the right to expect our planners and officials to thoroughly consider the impacts of their decisions. They should also be able to answer our questions without resorting to magical thinking (e.g., if we approve all this mega development, a reliable electric grid with sufficient capacity to support it all will magically appear).

A great place to start would be to have a growth management policy that actually manages growth. But as Jim Humphrey pointed out in his excellent 23 August 2012 MoCo Civic Federation column, *Lost: One Growth Policy*, "The county process for deciding the appropriate amount of growth is nonexistent. It's a little like throwing darts at a blank wall and telling everyone you're hitting the target. We don't have a clue what goal we are aiming at, or whether the amount of growth that's planned is sustainable."

In his 1 November 2012  
(continued on page 4)

## NFCCA BOARD

The Board of Directors for the Northwood-Four Corners Civic Association meets five times a year, in October, December, February, April, and June. Current officers are:

### President

Brian Morrissey  
10301 Edgewood Avenue  
301.593.4026  
merc259@verizon.net

### Vice President

Fiona Morrissey  
10301 Edgewood Avenue  
301.593.4026  
loveyourhome123  
@yahoo.com

### Treasurer

Linda Perlman  
1203 Caddington Avenue  
301.681.3735  
LSPerlman@hotmail.com

### Secretary

Steve Petersen  
10828 Margate Road  
301.593.1597  
sap108@verizon.net

### At Large

Gregory Daniel  
10416 Mountain Quail Rd.  
301.458.0423  
greg\_daniel@yahoo.com

Kaleen O'Connor  
219 University Blvd., W.  
703.507.7158  
mangotree95  
@hotmail.com

Carolyn Van Dyck  
10702 Ordway Drive  
301.244.5371  
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## High on Density

(continued from page 3)  
column, *Time for Growth to Pay for Itself*, Humphrey also notes, "Another problem is that the Council did away with development moratoriums in 2003. Until then, if the infrastructure in any given area of the county—especially the schools, roads, and transit capacity—could not accommodate additional growth, then a moratorium was placed on new development approvals until the county could fund the needed additional infrastructure."

It's hard to see how we can ever come close to the shiny future depicted by the advocates of high-density mixed-use development without considering these fundamental questions. ■

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## New Year's Resolutions to Live By Every Day

As you embark on 2013, it's very likely that you'll know someone making a New Year's resolution or you'll be making one yourself. The fact is, setting a goal or two is a good thing. Goals are necessary to create change and achieve goals. However, if you have unrealistic health and fitness goals, you could be setting yourself up to fail by January 15th. According to researchers, most folks have thrown in the towel by mid-February. Don't let this be you! Below are some tips to help you meet your fitness goals. The great thing about these tips is that you'll be able to live by them every day, increase your odds of success, and avoid beating yourself up when you experience slip-ups.

**Resolution #1: Enjoy life more.** How many times have you pressed through a busy day of carpools, work, and other responsibilities with dread? It's common to get caught up in the hustle and

bustle of to-dos, but make sure you don't fall and stay in that pattern. Take some time each day to be grateful for family and friends, start researching a dream trip, or take some time at a park to journal. Make it a habit to practice enjoying life more. For example, savor the simple things, reflect on a lesson, or plan for the future. The by-product of all this enjoyment is less stress, which in turn leads to better overall health.

**Resolution #2: Move more.** I know what you're saying and it goes something like this, *I'm very active.* The reality is that as you age, you're less active than you think. On your active days, step things up by walking around as you check the mail, standing instead of sitting during meetings, and marching in place while you brush your teeth. The point here is that if you move more, you'll burn more calories, improve your flexibility, and sleep bet-

ter. Make it a point to move more throughout the day and you may live longer!

**Resolution #3: Eat better.** Studies show that most people overstate how well they eat and under-report how much they eat junk foods. Instinctively, we're experts at denying what we really eat and this is an area that can sabotage our nutrition, increase our weight, and cause weight-loss plateaus. If you're trying to lose weight, where and when you eat are just as important as what and how much. Here's the caveat, though: *eating better will take work.* It may require you to shop at several grocery stores to get the best selection, cook more at home, and eat out (a lot) less. However, once you take the leap and eat better for at least six weeks, your body will feel better and you'll see results faster.

You can make and achieve your health and fitness goals. Live by these three resolutions in 2013 and every day. Your life will improve and you'll be able to celebrate everyday victories!

*[Valerie Merriweather, MHA, ACE, NASM, is Chief Executive Officer of Fitwell Training Solutions, a personal training and wellness company specializing in the health and fitness of busy women. She lives on Playford Lane in the Forest Knolls community. Valerie can be reached at fitwellsolutions.com.]*

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## Another 4C Business Closes

By Jacquie Bokow

Free State Press, a printing business in Four Corners a few doors down from Red Maple, will have closed its doors by the time you read this.

"It's a good location," said Mr. P. Chong, the owner, "but the economics are bad, [with] high rent."

The business, which has been in that location 30 years, doesn't seem to have changed

with the times.

"The rent has gone up and many customers are gone now," said Chong. Other printers are "using computers" now, which he never has.

"I can't make money," he said.

Chong is moving the equipment to a "home office" in Columbia, Md., where he sounded hopeful he can still get some business. ■



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## HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO MY LOYAL CLIENTS,



**Happy Holidays and Best Wishes for the New Year from my family to yours!**

First, a sincere and heartfelt thanks for your support this year. I am grateful to so many of you who trusted me to assist you in the sale of your home And/Or the purchase of your new home (maybe your first home purchase!). I also got to know some of you a bit better when you stopped in an open house to chat about the local market, get decorating ideas for your home, or to just meet the local Realtor. To each and every one of you, it was a joy and blessing to meet you and to get to know you .

As we near the end of yet another challenging year in real estate, I feel pleased to bring you some positive news just in time for the holidays. While 2012 was one of the tougher years for real estate, it was a tremendous improvement over 2011. Low interest rates, an expanded variety of lending programs and an overall decline in home prices making our homes more affordable to a wider range of buyers, has spurred activity in our area. Median home prices in the Washington area are up 11.5%! [Source: MRIS.]

The market is picking up pace, we have closed the gap, and the market turbulence is down to a small wake. There's no expectation that we'll see double-digit increases any time soon, but the market is showing all the signs of improving and soon will be providing very reliable returns on home sales. Buyers are entering the market with more certainty in the stabilized value of their new home purchase. Sellers are also feeling more assured that they'll strike a fair deal in their sale. Expect big, positive changes in 2013. It's going to be the best year ever!

*With warm regards,  
 Tamara*



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# Low-Int. Financing for Energy Efficiency Upgrades

The Maryland Energy Administration (MEA) has partnered with the Maryland Clean Energy Center (MCEC), with support from the U.S. Department of Energy, to develop an innovative energy efficiency financing initiative for Maryland property owners.

As part of the Governor's Smart, Green, and Growing Initiative, the Maryland Home Energy Loan Program (MHELP) will help Marylanders take control of their energy future and stimulate new "green collar" jobs.

There are two interest rates available for eligible consumers—6.99 or 9.99 percent. A 6.99 percent annual percentage rate (APR) is available for consumers completing a Home Performance Energy Audit and installing various energy-efficiency measures including insulation, duct sealing, weatherstripping, equipment replacement, chimney repairs, and more. They've recently adding solar PV systems and geothermal systems to the list of eligible items! Details on what kind of work is eligible is available at [www.mcecloans.com](http://www.mcecloans.com).

The first step toward securing a 6.99 percent loan is completing a Home Performance home energy audit. The resulting audit report will recommend several ways a home can save energy.

With audit recommendations in hand, Marylanders can visit [www.mcecloans.com](http://www.mcecloans.com) to apply. Loans are available for primary residences only and

condos are not eligible.

A second rate of 9.99 percent APR is available for consumers completing equipment upgrades only, such as a furnace or HVAC unit that meet MCEC and ENERGY STAR standards. A Home Performance energy audit is not required for the 9.99 percent

program. Loans are available up to \$30,000.

Questions regarding the loan program can be directed to the Maryland Clean Energy Center at 301.738.6280 or [loans@mdcleanenergy.org](mailto:loans@mdcleanenergy.org).

[Reuven Walder is Founder/V.P. of Ecobeco LLC (301.802.7038 or [reuven@ecobeco.com](mailto:reuven@ecobeco.com).)]

## North Four Corners Book Group

By Carolyn VanDyck

Inspired by neighbors Esther Starobin and Carolyn Ross's column, "Neighborly Notes," in the April 2012 issue of the *Northwood News*, an organizational meeting was held in May to invite all interested to participate in a monthly book discussion series. Twelve of our neighbors attended and suggested a list of books to read and the meeting schedule: the third Thursday of the month, at 7:30 p.m., at a volunteer host's home.

It was a great beginning, and meetings have been held every month except August since. Books discussed have been *The Buddha in the Attic*, *Wolf Hall*, *Major Pettigrew's Last Stand*, *Winter Rose*, and *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*. The next meeting will be 17 January; the book to be reviewed will be *Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet*. Additional members are welcome. For additional information, contact Esther Starobin at [estarobin@gmail.com](mailto:estarobin@gmail.com).



From left, Joanna Connors, Sandra Figler, Iris Peabody, Judy Vann, and Bev Hollrah are just a few of our neighbors attending the monthly meetings of the NFC Book Club.

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# The BRT, White Oak Master Plan, and the Future

(continued from page 2)  
Commission's (MNCPPC) planning staff is currently formulating recommendations for the most likely roadways that would support BRT routes and whether these would involve using medians, dedicating existing traffic lanes, or sharing lanes with other traffic. These will be submitted as final recommendations to the Planning Board in January.

## The BRT—A Solution That May Have Outlived Its Time?

While the County is considering spending billions on building a BRT system to address traffic congestion, there is strong evidence that other alternatives may be less expensive and more effective. For example, in 2008, traffic congestion dropped 30 percent nationally (99 of the 100 largest metro areas) and at all hours of the day with little change in transportation capacity. The difference is attributed to modest reductions in traffic volumes (about three percent of urban interstate miles traveled). The conclusion is that policies which can smooth traffic volumes over a road network and times of day will have much greater impact at less cost than attempting to build our way out with more highways or transit systems focused on growing peak hour demands. (See The Tipping Point, [www.ceosforcities.org/blog/the-tipping-point](http://www.ceosforcities.org/blog/the-tipping-point).)

The transportation/urban planning communities are moving to recognize the emergence of technologies

that enable self-piloted vehicles (SPVs) that will make large transit vehicles unnecessary except for moving large groups of people long distances. *The Wall Street Journal* has carried a series of opinion pieces making this point (see <http://blogs.wsj.com/drivers-seat/2012/07/18/opinion-paving-the-way-for-driverless-cars/>). SPVs can be safer than manually driven vehicles, reducing accidents, significantly increasing the country's transportation capacity by efficient usage of existing roadways, and providing the attractive benefit of door-to-door service that most mass transit systems cannot. Google has been touring the state capitals to introduce state legislators to its self-piloted cars.

While some may object that such new technologies will take years before they are implementable, the plans for the BRT system extend its completion as far as 2040. With no ready source of funding available for the BRT and the proposed financing plans involving either amending the state constitution, restructuring the state's property tax system, or persuading the County's business community to pay for the entire BRT system, it is not an immediate solution as envisioned.

There is a cheaper, more immediate solution to reducing vehicles from the Up County and Howard County that are clogging up Route 29. Despite the best efforts to speed the BRT vehicles along Route 29, it is still nearly

twice as fast to route express buses from these locations onto I-95. The current MTA express service that does this is extremely limited (southbound only from 5 a.m. to 7 a.m. and northbound 3 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. only). Increasing the frequency of this service and adding routes to other Up County destinations could be done for far less the billions that the BRT will cost and much sooner.

## Why Should I Care?

With all of these problems, won't it be decades before the BRT affects the Four Corners area? Unfortunately, no. Route 29 and Four Corners have repeatedly been identified by various public officials and agencies as the location in the County where the BRT concept should be tested. This is because of its high degree of traffic congestion, multiple traffic flows—including Beltway backups—and frequency of bus service. What could go wrong?

Furthermore, there are additional pressures to impose a BRT on Route 29 in order to enable massive new development being planned for the White Oak Master Plan area. (The primary affected area extends northward along Route 29 to Cherry Hill Road, to the County Line, to the Beltway, to the Northwest Branch. For more information, go to [www.montgomeryplanning.org/community/wosg/](http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/community/wosg/).) The chart on page 9 summarizes the size and scale of the development being proposed in the  
(continued on page 9)



# The BRT, White Oak Master Plan

(continued from page 8)

White Oak Master plan and compares it to other locations.

A major concern is that this very dense commercial and residential development is planned for an area that already has high levels of traffic congestion and no mass transit services, except for buses. And this does not include the thousands of Federal workers still scheduled to be moved to the FDA site in the coming years. Consequently, the approval of the BRT concept *could* be critical to the approval of this development.

## TPAR or Not to TPAR, That is the Question

Over the years, Montgomery County has used several methods to either link new development to transportation and school capacity or levy fees on developers to compensate for the additional demand for new infrastructure resulting from their projects. The most recent version of this is called TPAR (Transportation Policy Area

Review), which continues this approach to insure that local transportation facilities are not overwhelmed by uncontrolled growth. However, the largest developer in the White Oak Master Plan area—Percontee, Inc.—has been heavily lobbying the County officials to exempt this area from the TPAR requirements.

At the County Council's Planning, Housing, and Economic Development (PHED) Committee and in the full Council vote, Council Members Nancy Floreen and George Leventhal supported this exemption. Council Member Marc Elrich voted against the exemption at the PHED Committee and the other seven Council Members also subsequently voted against it.

However, the TPAR exemption idea is expected to be included as part of the draft White Oak Master Plan that will be reviewed by the MNCPPC Planning Board in the first half of 2013. Upon approval of the Master Plan

expected during the Summer 2013, it will be passed to the County Council for its approval.

## Conclusion

So what does all of this mean? The convergence of these pending plans and policies can have a great significance for the quality of life, traffic congestion, and taxes for the Four Corners communities. While it can be confusing and time-consuming to stay informed as these issues keep changing and different information becomes available, it is important for our future as a neighborhood.

Improving public transit services is important, but it should serve the close-in, walkable communities and not promote further sprawl by facilitating and subsidizing long-distance commuting.

New development in the East County area should occur in stages compatible with local transportation infrastructure capacity.

All developers should be required to contribute to any transportation improvements to relieve congestion.

All alternatives for reducing traffic congestion should receive equal consideration and not just the solution favored by one group of supporters.

As these issues are debated in the coming months and years by the MNCPPC Planning Board, County Executive, and County Council, you must express your opinions on these matters or you and our community can expect to be roadkill on the County's drive to progress. ■

Comparison to Other Planning Areas—Is This Smart Growth?				
Plan Area	Metro Station	Residential Units	Jobs	Commercial Space
White Oak (now)	No	7,118	27,688	11 million square feet
<b>White Oak (proposed)</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>15,688</b>	<b>70,312</b>	<b>25 million sq.ft. (equivalent to 11 Wheaton malls)</b>
Fairland	No	20,886		
Downtown SS	Yes	6,936	30,400	
Wheaton	Yes	2,611	8,830	
Glenmont	Yes	1,167	677	
Bethesda CBD	Yes	6,700	35,800	
White Flint	Yes	2,100	18,100	



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Our past Spring/Summer Market was far more active than it has been in several years. Several deals were made harder to conclude by the new processes for appraisals and loan approvals. With that said, I am very proud to report, *Your Home Team* has settled (52 closed sales /23 closed rentals) 75 transaction sides, resulting in \$25 Million in Sales so far in 2012!

**Recent Sales in the Northwood Area Since July 1, 2012**

ADDRESS	SALE PRICE	SELLER SUBSIDY	% TAX ASSMT	STYLE	BR	BA/HBA	DOM	SUBDIVISION
10430 Brookmoor Dr	\$544,000	\$15,000	123.9%	Rambler	4	3	11	Woodmoor
10414 Mountain Quail Rd	\$530,000		122.9%	Contemporary	3	4	7	Northwood Park View
302 Williamsburg Dr	\$475,000	\$5,000	122.9%	Colonial	3	2	28	Woodmoor
313 Hillmoor Dr	\$425,000		94.5%	Cape Cod	3	3	28	Woodmoor
10006 Quinby St	\$423,000	\$12,000	143.4%	Cape Cod	5	3	51	Sunset Terrace
1114 Meurilee Ln	\$417,500	\$5,000	132.2%	Colonial	3	2	7	Rosewood
806 Malta Ln	\$415,000	\$10,000	123.5%	Split Level	5	2/1	41	Forest Knolls
10427 Edgewood Ave	\$402,500	\$7,500	100.1%	Cape Cod	4	2/1	13	Northwood Park
10828 Lorain Ave	\$395,000		96.2%	Rambler	3	2	24	Woodmoor
502 Kerwin Rd	\$389,900	\$11,670	112.0%	Cape Cod	5	3	40	Northwood Village
9914 Sutherland Rd	\$379,900	\$17,500	118.0%	Colonial	2	2	28	Fairway
10409 Edgewood Ave	\$375,000	\$11,250	112.1%	Colonial	4	2	242	Northwood Park
403 Hannes St	\$369,000	\$8,000	118.6%	Split Foyer	4	3	10	Forest Knolls
1104 Caddington Ave	\$360,000	\$7,200	121.3%	Split Foyer	5	3	14	Forest Knolls
1006 Caddington Ave	\$350,000	\$10,000	119.3%	Split Level	4	3	51	Forest Knolls
413 Dennis Ave	\$340,000		98.1%	Rambler	3	2/1	22	Northwood Knolls
1001 Kerwin Rd	\$340,000	\$5,000	118.7%	Cape Cod	4	2	116	Ballantrae
102 Hannes St	\$330,000		92.7%	Rambler	5	3	52	Northwood Park View
1136 Loxford Ter	\$320,000	\$6,000	109.4%	Split Level	4	2/1	64	Forest Knolls
10209 Procter St	\$319,000	\$6,000	112.0%	Cape Cod	4	2	53	Mcdonald Knolls
10702 Eastwood Ave	\$315,000		94.0%	Cape Cod	5	2/1	30	Northwood Village
10710 Eastwood Ave	\$315,000	\$9,000	96.9%	Split Level	3	2	298	Northwood Park
243 Hannes St	\$315,000	\$9,450	97.6%	Rambler	3	2	7	Northwood Park View
10813 Tenbrook Ct	\$315,000	\$2,500	102.1%	Other	6	3	245	Sligo Estates
904 Gabel St	\$310,000		114.1%	Rambler	4	2	85	Sligo Estates
11017 Lombardy Rd	\$309,900	\$9,297	94.2%	Rancher	4	2	418	Northwood Park View
10002 Raynor Rd	\$298,000		92.3%	Colonial	3	2	7	Argyle Club Estates
1106 Carson St	\$293,500		100.8%	Colonial	3	1	4	Rosewood
10711 Cavalier Dr	\$280,000	\$6,000	81.7%	Rambler	4	2	15	Northwood Park
411 Royalton Rd	\$280,000		87.3%	Rambler	3	1	4	Northwood Knolls
1113 Dennis Ave	\$278,000		96.5%	Cape Cod	3	1	33	Rosewood
902 Kerwin Rd	\$230,000	\$6,900	74.8%	Cape Cod	5	2	0	Ballantrae
426 Belton Rd	\$226,000		72.9%	Rambler	5	2	4	Northwood Village
207 University Blvd W	\$225,000		59.1%	Cape Cod	3	2	9	Northwood Park

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## ***Woodmoor Reminiscences***

# **Hoover-Fisher Florist Still Blooming After 50+ Years**

*By Jacquie Bokow*

Our local florist, owned by a family who lived in our neighborhood, has been selling flower arrangements of all types for almost 60 years. Hoover-Fisher Florist is the flagship business at Woodmoor Center in Four Corners, occupying both floors at the southern, University Boulevard end of the shopping center.

The original owners, Jim and “Cookie” (Carolyn) Fisher, lived on Belton Road. [Full disclosure: they lived two doors from my own childhood home, so I knew the family.] The parents opened their first florist shop, James E. Fisher Florist, at University and Piney Branch Road in 1954. In 1960, they incorporated with Jim’s sister and her husband, the Hoovers, who had a florist shop in Washington, D.C.

In the early 1970s, the couple opened their second shop at Woodmoor, which Cookie Fisher ran, in the space on the front side of the arcade now occupied by Keller Realtor. Eventually, the two businesses swapped spaces, although the florist had only the first floor for the first five years; then both floral shops were consolidated in Four Corners.



Photos by Jacquie Bokow

*Current owner Bill Fisher, standing in the shop with his daughter Allie, is the youngest son of original owners Jim and Cookie Fisher, who lived on Belton Road in our neighborhood.*

When the Hoovers retired, the Fishers bought them out; Bill Fisher, the youngest of the Fisher’s four children, bought out his parents in 1986, about 20 years before they retired.

According to Bill, he and all his siblings worked at the store when they were younger. His sisters Lee and Carolyn worked for short periods of time until their respective marriages and subsequent

moves out-of-state. His brother Jimmy worked at the business for about 15 years until he, too, married and became a stay-at-home dad.

Keeping the business in the family, Bill’s second daughter, Allie, works at the florist full-time as Customer Sales Manager; she’s responsible for their website and social media, including Twitter, Facebook, and emails. ■

# '4 Corners Pub' Opens in 'Corner Pub' Location

By Jacquie Bokow

Fans of the "Corner Pub" in Four Corners, which closed in July, will be delighted with the new "4 Corners Pub" which opened in the same location on the Monday before Thanksgiving.

The refurbished space has the same floor plan: a spacious seating area for diners in front and a U-shaped bar in the back. Multiple televisions, set constantly to sporting events, occupy the walls around both rooms.

New owners Mike O'Connell and Brian Smith have been friends for 35 years but this is their first business venture together. Both are locals: O'Connell had two different homes in Woodmoor (he now lives on Kent Island) and Smith—and his wife—graduated from Blair High School.

Smith's two sons also work at the restaurant/bar: Spenser is general manager



and Dan does the accounting and ordering.

"Everything is fresh, not frozen," said Smith, and salad "dressings are homemade."

According to Smith, they replaced about one-quarter of the items off the old "Corner Pub" menu, "adding a few healthier items."

out available, and will shortly have a more limited Late Night Menu after 10:00 p.m.

## What Happened to the Old Pub?

According to Steven Greenfeld, the Chapter 7 Trustee, Patricia Howlin is the owner of the property. She leased to Randy Hurowitz (Hurowitz LLC), who was operating The Corner Pub. She sold the business (tables, chairs, ovens, etc.) but leased the property. Hurowitz was



*The 4 Corners Pub retains the parking lot of its predecessor.*



*Owners Brian Smith (left) and Mike O'Connell (right) flank Smith's son Spenser, who's their general manager.*

Besides the usual pizza, burgers, and sandwiches, you can also get crab soup, had-dock, salmon, steak, spaghetti with meatballs, and chicken parmesan. Five different salads are also available.

"Business is through the roof," said Smith, with a "pretty good lunch business" despite their only having been open less than a week when I visited. "We try to get people in and out" quickly for lunch, said Smith.

The jovial owners say they are planning to make carry-

supposed to pay for it over time. She kept a lien on the property until it was paid off, but Hurowitz defaulted on the rent. She was about to take it back when Hurowitz filed for bankruptcy.

Mike O'Connell was best friends with the late Fred Howlin, Jr., Patricia's husband, who was the son of the Fred Howlin who started Fred & Harry's Seafood Restaurant in 1945 where Red Maple is now. Patti LaBuda Howlin is a graduate of Northwood High School, class of 1972. ■

# The Day Care Scoreboard for Brunett, Rec Center

By Jim Zepp

## The Special Exception Zoning Request on Brunett, University

This concern has been extensively covered in previous issues of the *Northwood News* (see [www.nfcca.org](http://www.nfcca.org)). This article is to provide an update on the current status of this special exception zoning request that has dragged on for the last five years, mainly due to delays requested by the developer (Gilmourne Brunett, LLC.) and project plan revisions that were unresponsive to prior objections and denials.

The Board of Appeals (BOA), having denied the developer's special exception request for a second time, set a deadline of Friday, 9 November, for his attorney to file an appeal with the Circuit Court. Instead, another petition was submitted to the BOA citing the portion of the County's Zoning Code that states if a special exception request receives an insufficient number of votes for approval then it is denied and the applicant must wait 36 months before submitting another request for the same project. This maneuver was sufficiently confusing for everyone that the BOA decided that this request was outside its jurisdiction and denied the request.

At this point, even the developer's attorneys from the law firm Linowes and Blocher seem unsure of what to do. Having started with all of the required permits and zoning for the construction of five luxury homes, the developer

decided that building a very large (150 child, infant to high school age) day care facility would be a better investment. It is estimated that nearly \$2 million in fees to lawyers and other consultants has been spent to secure this special exception request that, from the beginning, was generally recognized as violating state regulations for day care facilities on a property of this size and being noncompliant with the language in the Four Corners Master Plan. This is the result of these expenditures.

Review Level	Approvals	Denials
MNCPPC Plng. Staff	1	2
MNCPPC Plng. Board	0	2
Board of Appeals	2*	3
Total	3	7

The two approvals by the BOA (asterisk) were subsequently shown to violate their own procedures; following both instances, the BOA voted to deny the developer's special exception request.

The communities are waiting for the developer to decide his next move, but the dedication and hard work of residents from the South Four Corners, Woodmoor-Pinecrest, and Northwood-Four Corners Civic Associations have shown that money doesn't buy everything.

## Leasing of North Four Corners PAB

The County Parks Department has been attempting to secure a tenant to lease the one-room, log cabin, park activity building (PAB) in the North Four Corners Park along with seven similar structures around the County.

The Silver Spring YMCA had submitted a bid to lease the building as a 30 child day care facility, but subsequently withdrew its offer (see *Northwood News*, October 2012).

On 15 October, the Parks staff issued a new request for proposals (RFP) to lease only the North Four Corners PAB. As an opportunity to view the structure and asked questions of the Parks staff, a bidders conference was held on Friday, 9 November, at the PAB. Representatives from a Montessori school and a day care operator attended and the Parks staff reported that two other organizations had expressed interest in the building but did not come to this meeting. When asked about their priorities for selecting a bid, the Parks staff responded that they want the lease to be revenue neutral (in other words, to not lose or make money for the agency), but that the main objective in assessing any bids would be to have a compatible use for a public park. I indicated that the community would want to be able to have meetings and other events at the facility during evenings and weekends.

The deadline for submitting bids to the Parks Department was 27 November. More information is available at [www.montgomeryparks.org/permits/park\\_activity\\_building\\_comments.shtml](http://www.montgomeryparks.org/permits/park_activity_building_comments.shtml).

The Parks staff will take a few weeks to review any proposals that they receive and will then announce the

(continued on page 14)

# Update on the PROS Plan

By Carole A. Barth

The 2012 Park Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan estimates future (i.e., over the next decade) parks and recreation needs and presents strategies for meeting those needs. On 8 November, the Council's Planning, Housing, and Economic Development (PHED) Committee were briefed on the 2012 PROS plan. In preparation for that briefing, Carole Barth transmitted to the Council the PROS testimony we had previously submitted to the Planning Board.

In a cover email, we noted that the concerns expressed in the testimony grew out of a thorough review of both the 2012 PROS Plan and the 2005 Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan (LPPRP) which preceded it; many discussions with Parks staff over the past 11 years, as well as following the Parks CIP proposals and observing the maintenance and management of Montgomery Parks facilities.

From that perspective, we urged the PHED Committee to carefully consider the affordability (and financial sustainability) of constructing all the new park facilities outlined in the PROS plan. In the CIP process, we reminded the committee, the question is whether or not to fund construction of a particular project based on available funds and competing needs and desires during that CIP cycle. However, we asked the PHED to look beyond the individual facility types and consider the

plan's totality.

We further suggested that, in these tough financial times, it's important to develop consensus on what is really needed and what is affordable. What is the aggregate impact of this plan? Is the County obligated to provide state-of-the-art facilities for every conceivable sport and hobby? Is it more important to have convenient, nearby facilities or is it more important to have regulation-sized facilities? Should the County pursue an aggressive program of facility construction when many existing facilities cannot be adequately maintained?

Lastly, we expressed hope that the PHED would continue to monitor these issues and revisit them in future PHED Committee meetings. ■

## 2012-2013 NFCCA Meetings

Please mark these dates on your calendar for the upcoming meetings of the Northwood-Four Corners Civic Association:

**20 December 2012**

**13 February 2013**

**10 April 2013**

**12 June 2013**

*These meetings are usually held at Forest Knolls Elementary School from 7:30-9:00 p.m.*

# Reporting Out Streetlights

Pepco has launched an upgraded streetlight reporting system for its customers. Customers can access maps depicting streetlight locations using the "Bing" mapping engine that the utility claims is "easy to read and use."

Once a streetlight problem is reported, the new reporting system sends the customer an email with a tracking number, location, and pole number. When a streetlight is submitted for repair, the respective icon on the map will appear red; once the light has been repaired, its respective icon will turn green. In most cases, claims Pepco, the streetlight will be repaired within 15 days. An email confirmation will be sent to the customer when the service request has been completed.

To access the new reporting system, visit [www.pepco.com](http://www.pepco.com) and click "Alerts and Outage Information." ■

# Day Care Scoreboard

(continued from page 13) successful bidder. A meeting to introduce the tenant selected by the Parks Department is being scheduled for mid-January 2013. (Once it is scheduled, the meeting date and time will be posted on the NFCCA website and listserv.) That meeting will be open to the public to ask questions of the tenant and to offer suggestions for activities or services that they would like to have at the park building. ■

# Sushi Restaurant Takes Over Fajita Coast Space

By *Jacquie Bokow*

A new restaurant—and the only Asian offering in the neighborhood—opened in late October. Red Maple occupies the space next to GameStop that held the very popular Fajita Coast restaurant.

This is owner James Zheng's second restaurant in the area; he also owns Spring Garden on 16th Street in Silver Spring. His brother Qin is the head sushi chef at Red Maple. James moved here from New York to be with family, according to manager Rio Villa, who had been assistant general manager at Notti Bianche, an Italian restaurant in Washington, D.C.



Photos by Jacquie Bokow

*The stylish new restaurant is the second for owner James Zheng; his brother Qin is the head sushi chef at Red Maple.*



*Red Maple restaurant and bar opened in the old Fajita Coast space across from Woodmoor Center at the end of October.*

Besides a large sushi/sashimi and "roll" selection, diners also can order Chinese, Thai, and Japanese standards like General Tso's and Kung Pao chicken, pad thai, and tempura. A few vegetarian selections are also available.

By press time, the restaurant will be offering 10 to 11 different sakes in small bottles and red wines during

the winter, either by the glass or bottle. White wine will be available mostly in summer.

Red Maple will be offering "specialty cocktails available no where else," said Villa, which will include one called "Red Maple" and feature lychee, apricot, and yuzu. They also offer "Japanese Scotch," he said.

The restaurant will have

a Happy Hour from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. weeknights that will feature sushi and appetizers. Villa's also working on a Late Night Menu, which will be offered from 10:30 p.m. until 1:00 a.m. Monday through Saturday and until 2:00 a.m. Friday nights.

Red Maple currently is open 11:00 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. Monday-Thursday, 11:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. Friday and Saturday, and noon to 10:00 p.m. on Sundays. See [www.redmaplerestaurant.com](http://www.redmaplerestaurant.com) for details. ■



*Eugene is one of three sushi chefs at the new restaurant.*



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### Active & Under Contract Listings in Northwood/Forest Knolls/Kinsman As of 11/15/2012

<u>Active</u>	<u>List Price</u>	<u>Style</u>	<u>Bedrms</u>	<u>Full Baths</u>	<u>Half Bath</u>
507 Dennis Ave	\$899,900	Colonial	6	4	0
206 Hannes St	\$379,900	Rambler	4	2	0
10308 Lorain Ave	\$495,000	To Be Built	4	2	1
10108 Lorain Ave	\$349,000	Other	2	1	0
10163 Sutherland Rd	\$398,500	Colonial	4	3	1
124 Snowy Owl Dr	\$549,500	Colonial	4	4	0

#### CONTRACTS on the following properties:

10609 Glenwild Rd*	\$300,000	Bilevel	5	3	0
406 Hannes St	\$330,000	Rambler	3	1	1
501 Kerwin Rd*	\$260,000	Cape Cod	5	2	0
405 Kerwin Rd	\$299,500	Rambler	3	2	0
20 Kinsman View Cir	\$312,000	Townhouse	3	3	1
10810 Lombardy Rd*	\$289,000	Split Foyer	4	1	1
10919 Lombardy Rd	\$325,000	Rambler	3	2	0
11109 Lombardy Rd*	\$295,000	Rambler	5	2	0
10815 Margate Rd*	\$205,000	Split Level	4	2	1
120 Woodridge Ave	\$399,900	Cape Cod	4	2	1

\*Short Sale \*\*Foreclosure



•• Information deemed reliable but not guaranteed ••

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