



Over the Fence

News for Neighbors from the Arlington Heights Civic Association Spring 2007 Edition

Visit our website at <http://www.ahca.info> and our list serve at <http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/AHCA>

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

There is a lot going on in Arlington Heights, so this is a busy time for the Association. Most important, we have participated in the **Multi-Site Study Committee** through public comment. The School Board charged the committee to study land assets to raise money for capital improvements to South Arlington schools. The committee is considering options that affect the Career Center, Thomas Jefferson Middle School, and Wakefield High School, among others. We are also participating in the **Building Level Planning Committees** for the Career Center and Thomas Jefferson Middle School. These committees provide citizen input for renovations or rebuilding on these sites. For more information, see: www.arlington.k12.va.us/facilities/planning/mss.shtml and www.arlington.k12.va.us/facilities/design/careercenter.shtml.

Other efforts are also ongoing. The Association has completed a draft **Neighborhood Conservation Plan**, which is available for public review online at www.ahca.info and at the reference desk of the Columbia Pike Library. This is an important planning document for the neighborhood. The plan provides the county guidance by setting forth our vision for the neighborhood. The AHCA park committee is working with county staff and residents to plan the **new park** at 2nd and Irving. If you have not passed by lately, you will notice some new trees have already been planted in the park. We are active with the **Columbia Pike Revitalization Organization** and seeking out ways to encourage development, consistent with neighborhood priorities. Finally, we are in the midst of organizing a number of events for this spring, such as the **Plant Swap**, AHCA participation on **Neighborhood Day**, and the **Arlington Heights Garden Tour**.

All of these projects are opportunities to make the neighborhood a better place to live. Let us know if you have additional ideas. If there is anything you would like to make happen, consider volunteering.

Jim Gill

UPCOMING EVENTS

Friday, March 30, 2007, 7 p.m. -- AHCA Special Meeting on Neighborhood Conservation Plan

At this meeting the neighborhood will vote on whether to approve the draft Plan. Tim McIntosh, Arlington County Planner will give a presentation on the county's Neighborhood Conservation Program. The meeting will be held in the Patrick Henry Elementary School library.

Tuesday, April 10, 2007, 7 p.m. – AHCA Meeting at Patrick Henry Elementary School Library (agenda below)

Saturday, April 21, 2007 – Arlington Heights Gardener's Plant Swap

The idea is for gardeners to swap plants and possibly donate plants for our parks. Additional information will be available on the list serve and website as this date approaches, or contact Kimberly Sumner at ksum22204@yahoo.com.

Saturday, May 12, 2007 – Arlington County Neighborhood Day

AHCA is seeking a volunteer coordinator for our participation in the parade and possibly other events. Please call Juliet Hiznay at 703-685-2596 if you are interested.

Saturday, May 19, 2007, 8:30 a.m. -- Arlington Heights Garden Tour

Join us once again for the Arlington Heights Garden Tour. Tour neighborhood gardens, share knowledge and get ideas for your own landscape. Please contact John or Rebecca Mashaw at 703-892-3793, or email us at rmashaw@comcast.net, if you're willing to feature your garden on the tour. Don't be shy! Whether your garden is just getting started or the result of years of labor, you'll have experience and ideas to share. We'll meet at 8:30 am at the Mashaws'—2908 Fifth Street South—for coffee and pastries, and then begin our tour. The rain date will be June 9.

PLEASE SUPPORT YOUR CIVIC ASSOCIATION – JOIN FOR 2007

SEND TO: AHCA, c/o Jason Torchinsky, Treasurer, 3109 S. 7th St., Arlington, VA 22204

Name(s): _____

Address: _____, **Arlington, VA 22204**

Phone: _____ **E-mail:** _____

Enclosed is \$12.00 for a 2007 Family Membership **Enclosed is \$25.00 for a 2007 Business Membership**
 Enclosed is an added donation of \$_____

AGENDA FOR APRIL 10, 2007 MEETING

Date: **Tuesday, April 10, 2007, 7 p.m.**
Location: **Patrick Henry Elementary School Library**

Please join us for our next regularly scheduled meeting on Tuesday, April 10 at 7 p.m. The Association will welcome guests that evening. The Arlington County Vector Control Officer has asked to speak with us. Denise Marshall-Roller, event manager for Arlington County Fair and Fair Board member Shawn Kelley, will also attend and present plans for the 2007 Arlington County Fair (August 16-20). Among the items to be presented are: the new shuttle bus route and a pilot extension of the fair to Wednesday. There will also be a number of neighborhood reports on important items, such as reports from neighborhood representatives on the schools committees addressing potential renovations and rebuilding at the Career Center and Thomas Jefferson Middle School. The AHCA Park Committee also expects to report progress on the new park at S. 2nd St. and Irving.



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THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS!

A special thank you goes out to the many neighborhood volunteers who have made such a difference this quarter. There has been a lot of work to do, and we want to recognize your work. Volunteers have done everything from getting the word out on matters of interest to the neighborhood, serving on the AHCA executive committee, serving on neighborhood, county, and school board committees, offering public comment at meetings, preparing the draft Neighborhood Conservation Plan, coordinating neighborhood activities, and preparing and hand delivering this newsletter to your front door. Many thanks to: Megan Booth, Richard Bullington-McGuire, Cathy Camp, Martin Chadzynski, Joanna Cook, Maureen Critchely, Adam Crosswell, Nanci Edwards, Chris Eremia, Grady Foster, Jim Gill, Joan Gill, Tony Halloin, Juliet Hiznay, Carole Lieber, John and Rebecca Mashaw, Lynn Michaels, John Morrill, Monique O'Grady, Ron, Cathy, Gracie and Ryan Peterson, Sarah Reidy, Janet Shannon, David Sider, Betty Siegel, Bryan Sieling, Mike Sobolas, Janet Stein, Kimberly Sumner, Jason Torchinsky, Jay Vennett, and Jay Jacob Wind.

Why Becoming a State and Federal Historic District Is Good For Arlington Heights

Article Contributed by Cathy Camp

Arlington Heights is not yet eligible for the same historic district tax credits for home improvements as many other neighborhoods. For example, homeowners in Ashton Heights, Arlington Forest, Buckingham, Lyon Park and Penrose can all obtain tax credits since they are already state and federal historic districts.

By way of background, there are three types of historic districts: state, federal and local. The state and federal designations allow owners of homes that are 50 years old or older to take tax credits for home improvements. For districts that have only state and federal historic status, there are no design review boards; these only exist for *local* historic districts, such as Maywood. Thus, if Arlington Heights were a state and federal historic district, new roofing, plumbing, wiring, heating, gutters, insulation, finishing a basement, remodeling a kitchen, new bathrooms, architect fees, and refinishing floors of neighborhood homes would all qualify for a tax credit, *so long as* the outside of the home continued to have the same character of the home as originally built. To obtain a tax credit, you must first document the condition of your home inside and out, and fill out all forms required by law. Michael Leventhal, mleventhal@arlingtonva.us, Arlington the County Preservation coordinator helps with documentation.

What if you live in a Historic District and want to change the outside of your home? You are still free to make your changes, but you cannot claim a tax credit for the improvements on your state or federal taxes.

Here is an example of how the tax credit works. Suppose an improvement value of your real estate assessment of \$60,000 (does not include land value). The minimum amount you must spend to qualify for a tax credit is 25% of total improvement value, or in this case, \$15,000. With an improvement of \$15,000, you can take 25% off your state taxes, or \$3,750. You have ten years to take the credit, so if your annual state taxes were \$1,000 a year, you would pay nothing in state taxes for the next 3 years, and \$250 in the 4th year.

Let's get state and federal historic status for Arlington Heights, so we can start getting our tax credits like those in other neighborhoods! It will encourage residents to improve their homes, and it will especially help offset tax costs for those on fixed incomes. This is a win-win for Arlington Heights.

More information is available at:

<http://www.nationalregisterofhistoricplaces.com/VA/Arlington/districts.html>

http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/tax_credits/tax_credit.htm

<http://leg1.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp504.exe?000+cod+58.1-339.2>

http://www.nationaltrust.org/help/statewide_org.asp?st=VA

<http://www.arlingtonva.us/Departments/RealEstate/reassessments/scripts/DREADefault.asp>

Arlington Heights Civic Association -- 2007 Officers

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How to Shop for a Home and Maximize Your Time

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March 2007 Real Estate Update

Recently in Northern Virginia we have seen an increase in buying activity with the declining unsold inventories. From the 2nd quarter of 2006 through the 4th quarter of 2006 there was evidence of 10% to 20% asking-price reductions. Price cuts in the housing prices have stimulated buyers who had been sitting on the sidelines wondering when the market might bottom out to move back in and start shopping. The Washington DC area economy remains solid, with strong employment and significant in-migration. As inventory continues to decline, the selection of homes will once again become limited. **For prospective buyers, there may never be a better time to buy a home than right now.** Research indicates that home prices will not much lower. While certain local markets across the country may see limited price declines, the national and local DC area picture remains bright.

From a historic perspective, there was an average of 7% growth in area house prices in the last 30 years. From 1997 to 2005 there was a 138% growth in area house prices, which was an abnormal trend. Many industry experts are using the term "normalization", meaning that the housing market is returning to its long-term trend line. What we've experienced over the last several years has been extraordinary in terms of record low rates, record high appreciation, and liberal mortgage underwriting guidelines. The correction process began during the summer of 2005. Current conditions are looking favorable for a balanced real estate market as long as interest rates remain attractive and affordability is there for buyers. Affordable housing has been a problem for many who want to buy, and that will remain a critical issue.

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