

ALCOVA HEIGHTS

The Newsletter of the Alcova Heights Neighborhood, Arlington, Virginia

April 2012



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NEXT MEETING

Alcova Heights Citizens Association Meeting

Date: Thursday, April 19

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Location: Baptist Church,
8th and Monroe

Program:

1) Columbia Pike Housing Study

2) Neighborhood Conservation Plan

3) Traffic Committee Report

It's Spring, and Alcova Heights is Blossoming

by Marie Van Ness, AHCA President

Dear Neighbors,

So far I've enjoyed this year's spring. Although many trees and flowers bloomed way ahead of schedule, perhaps it all falls in place with the changes we are experiencing here in Alcova Heights. It's nice to see people out in their yards, meet new neighbors and renew friendships with people who were inside during the winter months.

But now there is important work to do.

Neighborhood Newsletter

First and foremost is the newsletter. The board has determined that it is both environmentally and fiscally sound to reduce the number of newsletters we print. We are committed to making sure everyone who wants a copy of the newsletter gets one in the format they prefer, print or electronic. But we need your help. On the front of this newsletter is a one-question survey. How would you like to receive your newsletter, via email or in printed hardcopy? Please take the time to fill it out and return it to the newsletter editor, Scot Hoffman (834 S. Lincoln St.) or send him an email indicating your preference at scotrhoff@verizon.net.

We will run this survey in the next two newsletters, after which, **only homes that have indicated they would like hardcopies will receive printed newsletters.**

Because it goes out to everyone in the neighborhood, we consider the newsletter to be our most important avenue for getting information to Alcova Heights residents. So please take the time to complete the survey.

Neighborhood Association Meetings

We had a full house and a vibrant discussion at the February AHCA meeting, where county staff briefed us on the streetcar proposal. In an effort to continue this dialogue, staff will be at our next meeting, on Thursday, April 19, to brief us on the Columbia Pike Land Use & Housing Study. There will be time for questions and answer, so plan to attend and bring any concerns you have. We also will be looking at traffic committee recommendations and the proposed final draft of the Neighborhood Conservation Plan.

We are hoping to have county staff come to our June 21 meeting as well to talk about plans for the South 9th Street Bike Boulevard. Stay tuned for details on that.

Open Door Mondays

I know it can be difficult to keep up with all that is going on around our neighborhood, particularly regarding Columbia Pike. One great way to stay involved and get access to our county board members is through the Open Door Mondays

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New Garden? Get Started on the Right Foot

by Alice Nicholson



Phlox needs a sunny spot in the garden.

Spring! The birds are singing, grass growing, trees leafing, bulbs blooming. It's this time when many of us get inspired to do something about our yards. Unfortunately, we often go about it backwards! We go to the nursery, or Home Depot, or the hardware store, and buy plants that are in bloom or look just glorious in their pots. We bring them home and then wonder where to plant them. We buy some fertilizer, get out a shovel, and tackle a spot where we think we'd like to have a garden. We wear ourselves out preparing the soil a bit, throw on some fertilizer and maybe some lime, and then unpot the plants, dig a hole the size of the root ball, stick the plant in, and push the soil around it. Then we use the hose and sprinkle the bed for a few minutes.

Cut to a couple of weeks or months later. Some of the plants have dried out because we forgot to sprinkle several days in a row. Some have finished blooming and look like nothing at all. And some have grown like Godzilla and are shading everything else. What went wrong, and how could we have avoided this?

1. Plan ahead. Get a soil test to see what your designated flowerbed is really like. In our area, it may need a little lime but not necessarily. Plants like a pH of 6.5-7.0 (slightly acid), but if you've been spreading lime on your whole garden regularly for years, the pH may be 7.1 or even more alkaline – not ideal for most plants. Most soil here has an adequate level of the major nutrients with the exception of nitrogen, which is water-soluble and washes out of the soil fairly fast. However, nitrogen supports vegetative growth rather than flowering, so don't dump a whole lot on your plants! All-purpose fertilizer that says it's slow-release is the best bet, if you don't want to rely on county leaf mulch.

2. Soil consistency is important! Compacted soils that don't drain well make it really tough for plants to survive in. Try to increase tilth and good drainage by digging in a lot of organic material (county leaf mulch is ideal) every year. This will encourage earthworms and microfauna, which help aerate the soil and provide a nice low dose of nutrients. In a perennial bed, you can do this by using the leaf mulch as a top-dressing. About two inches is ideal. It will also keep the soil from drying out and heating up in the hot weather to come.



"Aster" comes from the Ancient Greek word meaning "star."

3. Plant selection is the last thing. If you buy perennials, they should come back again in future years, but their bloom period may be short. If you plant annuals, they may well bloom for a long time but will die over winter. Do you have full sun most of the day? Go for plants that prefer sun: Daylilies, phlox, asters, amsonia, lilies, penstemons, chrysanthemums and Siberian iris all do well and will each provide a couple of weeks of bloom. Check the size listed on the label as well as when it's said to bloom so you can plan the bed well.

If your garden plot gets no sun or only a couple of hours' worth, look for shade-tolerant plants. Hostas,

cont'd. on page 3



Siberian irises add a splash of color to any garden.

New Garden?

cont'd. from page 2

grown for their wonderful foliage, come in a zillion sizes and colors. Hellebores are evergreen and have lovely white to pink to red to black flowers in early spring. Ferns are classics for shade, of course. Native spring-blooming wildflowers like woodland phlox, heuchera and tiarella work well. Epimediums provide spring bloom and then handsome foliage the rest of the year. Bleeding hearts also work well, though they may go dormant in summer. There are even hardy orchids. Bletilla is one with small purple flowers, and it will spread if happy.

4. **To plant your newly purchased pots, knock the plant out of its pot and try to tease the roots apart a bit,** especially if you see what looks like a solid sheath of roots around the outside of the root ball. This plant is potbound, and to thrive



Hostas (top) and ferns thrive in the shade.

once planted, the roots have to be almost combed out so that they spread out around the plant instead of coiling around as they grew inside the pot. Sometimes it's best just to chop off all the roots at the bottom of the pot and perhaps even make cuts partway up the sides of the root ball so you can open up the root ball and enable the roots to regrow outwards. A plant that is moved from pot to hole undisturbed will not have roots that grow out into its new soil habitat, and may well die during the summer.

5. **Lastly, spread no more than two inches of mulch over the bare soil all around the plants, and water once, well.** Thereafter, water about once a week if there's no rain, soaking deeply each time.

Enjoy!

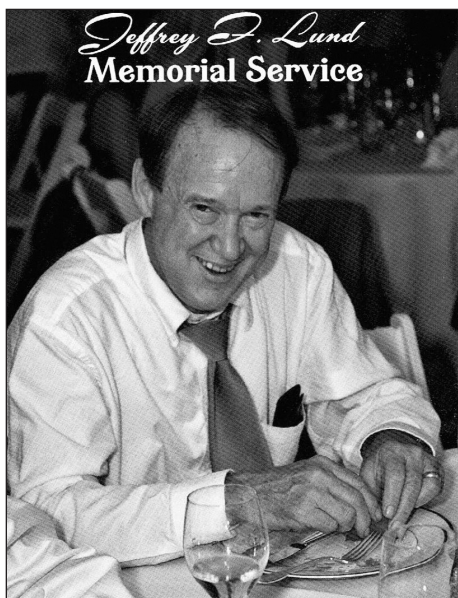
Eye on Alcovia Heights



This vintage Chevrolet was spotted on an Alcovia street.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Loss of a Longtime Neighbor



Jeff Lund, a longtime Alcovia Heights resident, passed away on February 25. His wife, Diane, has invited all who knew Jeff to attend a memorial mass on April 27 at 4:00 p.m., followed by a bereavement dinner, at the Cathedral of St. Thomas More near Glebe and Arlington Boulevard. April 27 is also Arbor Day, an appropriate day to remember Jeff, who was an active woodworker, Boy Scout leader, Tree Steward and recycler. We will miss our kind, gentle, helpful neighbor.

Church Bazaar

Arlington United Methodist Church, 716 South Glebe Rd., will hold a bazaar on April 28 beginning at 8 a.m. All are welcome.

Contact: Lydia Rodriguez,
pastorlydia@arlingtonumc.com.

Spring Events at Barcroft Elementary

Several events are scheduled at Barcroft Elementary School this spring.

- **Picture and class portrait day** is April 26.
- The **Annual Barcroft Spring Music Concert** will be held on May 2. And on May 11, Barcroft will take on Hoffman-Boston in the 3rd Annual Staff Basketball Game.
- Residents with young children can attend Barcroft's **Rising Kindergarten Open House** from 9:30 a.m. to noon on May 16. In addition, parents seeking to introduce their rising Barcroft kindergartners to other rising Barcroft kindergartners can contact Maura McMahon at pawmer2@verizon.net to arrange meetings this summer.
- On June 1, the school will host **Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month Celebration** on from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. All are welcome.
- Back by popular demand is the PTA's **Farm 2 Table Week** from June 3 to 9. Students will have a chance to sample healthy foods prepared on-site by local chefs.
- And on June 19, the school will say farewell to its 5th graders during the annual **Graduation Ceremony**.



Wakefield Plant Sale

The Wakefield High School PTA will host a Flowering Plant Sale on Saturday, May 5, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on the Dinwiddie St. side of the high school building. Herbs, annuals and perennials and flowering baskets will be available.

You can order in advance, but pre-orders are due by April 19 with payment. Visit the Wakefield website (apsva.us/page/17411) for more details and pre-order forms.

Newsletter Submissions

Please forward any milestones, announcements, article ideas, photos for the regular "Eye on Alcovia Heights" feature, etc. to scotthoff@verizon.net.

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The “Rosenthal” Site

Recent Meeting Looks at Development Details

by Lander Allin

Editor's Note: Alcova Heights neighbor Lander Allin attended a recent meeting on the “Rosenthal” site development at Glebe Road and Columbia Pike. He shared this summary of the proceedings.

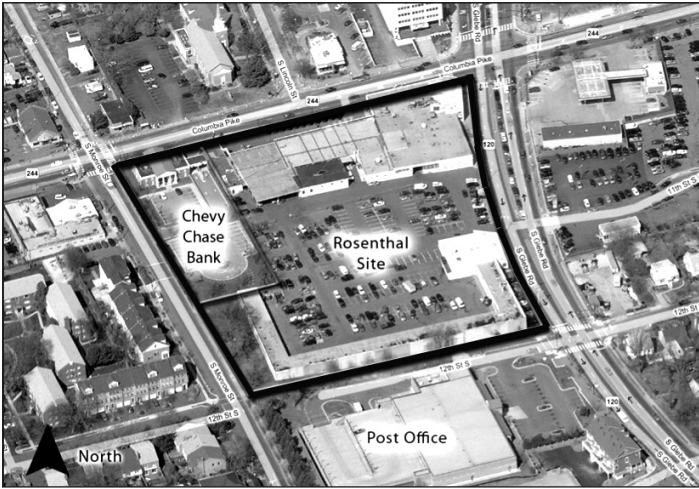


Image from <http://www.arlingtonva.us/departments/CPHD/planning/docs/pdf/Rosenthal%20awg%20packet.pdf>

Development overview:

1. The proposed development is a Form-Based Code (FBC) project. It is compliant with two exceptions. As I understand it, they are fairly minor and have been through the FBC working group, where they have been approved. Because it's an FBC project, the approval process is very short. The project was scheduled to be presented to the Planning Commission on April 9 and to the County Board on April 21.
2. It is a large site, and the FBC requires different types of development at the north and south ends. On the north end at Columbia Pike and Glebe Road, a six-story structure will fill the site. There will be 15,000 square feet of retail on the first floor. The premier retail space will be a 4,000-square-foot space on the Columbia Pike/Glebe corner. The upper five floors will contain 245 rental apartments: efficiencies and one- and two-bedroom units. On the back side facing the new 11th Street, there will be 12 stacked flats, also rental units, and 346 garage parking spaces will be provided for this portion of the

site. There will be 15 spaces devoted to the retail space with another 76 spaces for visitors of all types. In addition, there will be 26 on-street parking spaces.

3. At the south end between 11th Street and the new 12th Street (which will border the Post Office), there will be 44 townhouses. These will be 18 to 20 feet wide and contain 1,800-2,200 square feet of space. Most of the townhouses will have freestanding garages that will be accessed via alleys. The garages will house 50 vehicles. There will also be 19 on-street parking spaces.
4. Construction is scheduled to begin in August with demolition of the existing structures. The first concrete should be poured beginning in October. Total time for construction is 18 months.
5. The biggest unresolved issue is the timing of the construction of 12th Street. The Post Office has control over some of the land needed for the street. The county is working with the Post Office now on an agreement. Once that is done, the county will be responsible for the design and construction of the street. It needs to be ready by the completion of the project. If not, drivers entering from South Glebe and exiting to West Columbia Pike will not be able to do so without travelling through Douglas Park. There was a similar issue with the construction of 11th Street behind the Halstead. The county was able to complete that in time for the opening of the Halstead.

For more information, contact Lander Allin at landerallin@gmail.com.

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AHCA Traffic Committee Forwards Concerns to County

By Mike Kigin

The AHCA Traffic Committee met on March 6 and identified a number of issues. We considered various complaints and suggestions submitted by neighbors and brought many of the issues to the attention of county personnel. After several exchanges of emails, we feel that progress has been made on a couple of fronts.

First, the county has agreed to place additional pedestrian crossing signs on Columbia Pike at and approaching Oakland Street, to better identify the crosswalk and hopefully increase the safety of pedestrians who cross the Pike there. Additionally, county planners have been approached to consider moving to an earlier date the possible construction of a recommended traffic signal at that crosswalk.

An inquiry was made concerning crosswalks across Glebe Road somewhere between 7th Street and Columbia Pike. The county replied that it is considering a controlled crosswalk at 9th Street; this would accommodate pedestrians and a planned bike route that will cross Glebe Road at 9th Street as part of the Bike Boulevard Project within the Columbia Pike Initiative. Permission needs to be granted by the state for this to occur, and that request is in the early stages.

On another front, we have been in contact with the county's parking department and have received information which will facilitate future requests by AHCA or residents of Randolph Street concerning increased commuter parking that is now occurring near the park on both 8th and Randolph Streets. Various alternatives include:

- requesting additional two-hour parking alongside the park on Randolph and 8th Streets,
- moving the parking on Randolph by the park to the east side and allowing residents to apply for residential permit parking (with the possibility of two-hour parking within the permitted area to accommodate park users),
- doing nothing for another few months or a year to see how the situation there plays out.

We have also heard back from the county that traffic studies along Quincy Street do not justify speed bumps between 6th and 7th Streets. Further studies need to be done on the rest of Quincy Street.

Several other issues are still pending. These include:

- a proposed four-way stop at the corner of Quincy and 7th Streets,
- speed bumps on 7th Street,
- a possible median with a stop sign on 6th at Quincy,
- removal of an old utility pole on Quincy between 7th and 8th.



Feel free to email me at mikekigin@gmail.com with comments or additional issues you would like to see addressed, and I will bring them to the attention of the traffic committee.

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initiative. This is a chance to chat directly with board members at locations across the county. Meetings on the first Monday of the month are held from 7 to 9 p.m. right in our backyard at the Thomas Jefferson Community Center. For more information, visit the county website (www.arlingtonva.us) and search for "Open Door" or call 703-228-3130.

Other Affairs

There wasn't enough community interest this year to hold an Alcovia Heights yard sale at the church, but many people will be selling in their own yards on May 19 (rain date May 25.) So if you have stuff to sell, plan on those dates to benefit from the yard sale traffic in the neighborhood.

Many of you know that Dan and Alice Nicholson will be leaving us after living in Alcovia House for 48 years. They have been loving and invested neighbors who have given us immeasurable gardens of friendship and advice, and we will miss them very much. Neighbors are invited to gather at Sara and Mark Uzel's (3709 S. 6th Street) on Sunday

May 20 from 2 to 5 p.m. to bid them a fond farewell. Call or email me (mjvness@aol.com) if you would like more information or want to contribute to the party. All are welcome.

And finally, I'd like to recognize all the neighbors who came forward and paid their dues with the envelopes that were provided in the February newsletter. The response was excellent and has left us in a good position to cover the costs of our many popular neighborhood events. We're not there yet though, and every dues payment helps. If you haven't paid your \$10 annual neighborhood dues, please do so. You can drop a check or cash off to the association treasurer, Mark Cole (815 S. Oakland St.), or bring it to the neighborhood meeting next Thursday. Hope to see everyone at there.

Enjoy the spring.

Marie

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DC-Area Housing Market Ranks Among Nation's Strongest; Housing Affordability At All-Time High

Metropolitan Regional Information Systems (MRIS) data shows the DC-area housing market improved over last year:

***Inventory is down more than 25%**
(currently representing a three-month supply—*the lowest in seven years*)

***Purchase contracts are up 4.6%**
***Foreclosures are down 67.2%**
***Average price is up 1.4% overall**

*A market forecast by real estate statistical analyst Veros suggests that the local market will grow at 2.9% in 2012, and places the DC-area at **#3 in its "Projected Five Strongest Markets."**

*New Census Bureau data shows that Washington, DC ranks fourth on a list of most affluent cities. And, **ten of the richest counties in the US**, with highest median household income, are in the DC-region—five in Maryland and five in Virginia. Loudon (VA), Fairfax (VA) and

11 High Cost Home Inspection Traps You Should Know About Weeks

Before Listing Your Home For Sale

According to industry experts, there are over 33 physical problems that will come under scrutiny during a home inspection when your home is for sale. A special report identifies the most common of these problems, and what you should know about them before you list your home for sale - not after.

Whether you own an old home or newer one, there are a number of things that can fall short of requirements during a home inspection. If not identified and dealt with, any of these items could cost your dearly in terms of repair. That's why it's critical that you read this report before you list your home. If you wait until after you list your home for sale and the home inspector flags these issues for the



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