

Stoneleigh News

June 2005

Update from the President

Mitch Sacks
President, Stoneleigh Association

We have had a wonderful spring this year with lots of rain and cool temperatures. Despite the damage done to our grounds this past winter by Verizon's contractor, the property looks great! Springfield Nursery has the new benches installed, replacing the deteriorated concrete and wood benches, with new ones designed to be maintenance free and last for many years. The new benches are already receiving quite a bit of use. In case you haven't seen them yet, there is one in the park area at the front of the property, one in the park area at Alicent Place & Dunterry Place, and a third one at the end of Alicent Place overlooking McLean High School Park. We received a number of requests for a fourth bench to be placed in the park area at the end of Dunterry Court, and we will order one for that area as soon as funding allows. The board and Cardinal Management are continuing to work with Verizon to restore the grounds, and much of the restoration work is complete. We have identified a problem with the new junction boxes retaining water. Verizon has been

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Real Estate Outlook June 2005



Marshal Hyman
Member Board of Directors Stoneleigh

People used to ask me whether or not we are in a real estate "bubble." More and more I am being asked when this bubble is going to burst. My answer to both questions is that I do not know but more importantly I do not expect home prices in this area around Washington D.C. to go down any time soon.

The main rationale is owing to the same cause that has sustained prices in this area almost from the beginning of the Republic, jobs. As jobs continue come to this region the employees and their families need housing. Jobs are growing faster than new housing is being built. If you are interested in seeing economic data and economic indicators to sooth your worry about the value of your current home or the purchase of a new one, I recommend that you look at the monthly information provided by Fairfax County at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/comm/economic/economic.htm>.

The second reason for the continuance of the current strong housing market is financing. On the date I am writing this article the average thirty year mortgage nationally is 5.65% which is near historic lows. But as I write this article I hear on CNBC television that although the Federal Reserve may be trying to increase interest rates in order to cool the real estate market, for numerous other reasons longer term interest rates seem to be heading lower. Some are

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Con't. Report from the President

alerted, and is addressing the situation.

We had our annual spring cleanup a few weeks ago, and I want to personally thank all our homeowners for volunteering their time to come out and help clean up. I think we had one of our best turnouts ever, and it really shows how much each of us cares about the community.

Winnie Pizzano and I continue to have occasional meetings with Jim Ballard (Rosewood Development) the developer of McLean Cove. The latest information we have is that they will most likely perform site preparation this summer, which includes the joining the gap between their sanitary storm water pipe with Stoneleigh's, tearing down the remaining houses, clearing and grading the land, installation of underground utilities, and some preliminary work on Davidson road. Building plans are still incomplete, and Jim believes it will be next year before actual town home construction begins. No pricing information yet, but I still anticipate \$1 million plus.

In addition to the many other concessions we worked out with Rosewood over the past year, we have worked out some additional concessions from Jim which include saving quite a few trees behind Bruton Court; with the exception of some Walnut Trees closer to Chain Bridge which homeowners have requested be removed, and the trees right where the storm water pipes will be joined. The developer will also be replacing the sidewalk behind Bruton Court, and will tear down and replace our aging Stoneleigh sign at the front of the property. If you have any ideas on what you'd like the new sign to look like, let me know. Personally, I think the Hallcrest Heights board did a great job with their new signs.

Springfield Nursery will be on site within the next two weeks to address two problem areas on the property.

The first area is at the entrance to Dunterry Court where water is continually washing out the earth and making a muddy mess of the parking lot. The other area is on Candlewick Court in front of unit 1547. This area floods with every rain due because the sidewalks have sunk below grade.

Speaking of sidewalks, they are currently the biggest issue we have. Most of our sidewalks and lead walks

have exceeded their lifespan. We have just had our replacement reserve study completed, and are working out a plan to replace sidewalks and lead walks throughout the community. We don't yet have any cost estimates, but I anticipate we will need to impose an assessment on ourselves in order to fund the repairs. As soon as I have additional information I will forward it out to the community for feedback.

Lastly, I'm continually amazed at how much home prices in Stoneleigh have increased. End units are selling from the mid \$600's with interior units going for \$625,000! Marshal Hyman has a very interesting article in our newsletter sharing some of his views on the real estate outlook. As we move into summer, many of us are getting ready to head out on vacation, so we have a timely article from Don Sumihiro with tips on how to protect your home. I hope all of you have a great summer, and I look forward to seeing everyone at our annual July 4th bicycle parade.

Stoneleigh Directory Update

We are working to update the Stoneleigh Directory, and we need your help. **RESIDENTS:** Please review the Directory to verify that your information is correct. Likewise, **BLOCK COORDINATORS** PLEASE REVIEW YOUR BLOCK'S INFORMATION FOR ACCURACY. For those that do not have a directory on hand, it includes names, of occupants in each unit, address, telephone number, and email.

Please give correctors and or updates to either:

- Your block coordinator or
- Lori Murphy, 703-883-1157, 1610 Dunterry or
- Marian Hopkins, mehopkinsmclean@hotmail.com

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SPECIAL EVENT

PLACE MONDAY, JULY 4TH CELEBRATION

TIME

- 10 AM DECORATE BICYCLES, STROLLERS, & WAGONS
- 11 AM PARADE
- 12 NOON BRING PICNIC LUNCH
- 1 PM DESSERT PROVIDED (MAKE YOUR OWN SUNDAES)

Protect Your Home While on Vacation or Out of Town



Your Home Sends Signals

Marian Hopkins
Member Board of Directors Stoneleigh

The FBI reports that July and August – when most families vacation – are the two months with the highest number of home property crimes. It is easy to understand that your home and property is perhaps most vulnerable to theft and vandalism during extended periods of absence. In an effort to prevent an exciting vacation coming to a sad end, we have provided a list on page 4 of safeguarding tips to remember prior to your leaving.

Remember for emergencies call 911 and for non emergencies, call 703-691-2131. Use this number to report crimes which have already occurred and when the suspect is no longer in the area or to advise police of suspicious activity.

What is suspicious?

- Someone tries to open a neighbor's door
- Anyone peering into vehicles while walking down the street or someone removing license plates, gasoline or parts from a car; someone
- Attempting to enter a car using a coat hanger or other device.
- Persons loitering around the neighborhood
- Remember, burglaries often occur at times when they should be most obvious, such as in broad daylight.
- Business transaction conducted from a vehicle and often involving juveniles; a steady flow of strangers to and from a particular house on a regular basis at unusual times or late hours. This could indicate drug sales or fencing operations.
- Offers of goods or repair work at unusually low prices could indicate stolen property or some kind of fraud. Note: there is no solicitation in Stoneleigh. If people are coming around to your door, call the non-emergency number to report them. They could be casing the area to see who is at home.

Con't. Real Estate Outlook

saying that by the time you read this the average 30 year mortgage may be close to 5.3%. Naturally this is just an indication of interest rates because very few people nowadays seem to elect the traditional 30 year mortgage.

According to statistics in the MRIS Economic and Market Watch Report in the fourth quarter of 2004 the average housing unit in Fairfax County sold for \$459,200 and the first quarter of 2005 it rose to \$490,300. Quite a jump and still the forecast is for higher prices. My prediction (for what its worth) is that prices will stay high and even go higher but the rate of price increases will have to stabilize soon or you may hear the sound of air rushing about.

If you want to stay in Stoneleigh do not let an aggressive real estate agent scare you into selling on the basis that you better do it quickly before interest rates rise and prices slide. On the other hand, if you want or need to sell and are willing to be reasonable in pricing your home in that case you should pick a good agent and remember this is a seller's market.

UPDATE LANDSCAPING COMMITTEE



Winnie Pizzano
Chair, Landscape Committee, Stoneleigh Association

Over the next weeks we will do some replacement of shrubs and add a few new ones. We will be doing some hard pruning on azaleas and forsythia in the common areas. Right now we are just keeping up with the mowing.

Over the past year, we have spent considerable effort and funding on our trees. The current work includes insect control and fertilizer. All of the trees have small tags on them with numbers.

Generally, the tags are placed so that they are not obvious as you are walking by. If you have a problem with a tree, just send a note with the number to me. Some pruning will take part later in the season.

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Landscape Committee Update Con't.

Let us know if you have specific pruning issues with any of the trees. I have noted some dead limbs and some overhanging branches.

We ask that you keep your children out of the trees. There have been some broken branches and we do not want any broken bones. Tree houses are not permitted.

Good news - The selling of McLean High School Park for townhouse development appears to be a rumor. The Park will not be developed. However, we will continue to monitor any activity.

The Palladium - the new condominium on Chain Bridge near the fire station - and will begin settlements on apartments in June and most of our new neighbors will be moved in by September. Most of the retail space is still open, although the Starnut Gournet will be moving in.

The McLean Community Center is and will continue to hold focus groups and stakeholder sessions on expanding the Community Center. Citizens have made many suggestions including building a gym, improving the expanding Teen Center on Chain Bridge, building a "black box" theatre, and upgrading the technology in the existing center. If you have ideas, drop by the center and let them know.

RECIPE CORNER



Summer is Salad Time

- 1 Cup canola oil
- 5 Tbs. Balsamic vinegar
- 4 Tbs. sour cream
- 1 ½ tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. dry mustard
- 2 Tbs. sugar
- Black pepper (just a little)
- 2 tsp. parsley
- 2 cloves of garlic, crushed.

Mix all ingredients with a wire whisk. Chill six hours before serving. Lori Murphy who submitted this recipe says this is a winner and is especially good on a salad of spinach, red peppers, toasted pecans (toast on a baking sheet at 350 degrees for 5 minutes), and blue cheese.

TIPS TO SAFE GUARD YOUR HOME WHILE YOU ARE AWAY

- Strive to make your home look as lived-in as possible while you're away.
- Don't broadcast your plans but do let your neighbors and local law enforcement know.
- Give a spare key to your neighbors and give them an emergency telephone number to reach you.
- Arrange to have your mail and newspapers either stopped or picked up daily.
- Use automatic timers to turn on a radio and lights at different intervals to hide the fact you aren't home.
- Turn down the ringer on the telephone. An unanswered telephone is a dead give-away.
- Be sure you don't announce your absence on your answering machine message.
- Leave your blinds like you normally would if you were home. Only close them all the way if that is what you would normally do.
- Engrave all your valuables with your driver's license number. If possible video tape the contents of your home. Be sure to keep the video list of valuables in a safety deposit box.
- Ask your neighbor to occasionally park in your parking slot.
- Be sure someone knows your itinerary, departure time, and return date.

