

Neighborhood News



March/April 2008

Volume IV, Issue 2

Spring Cleaning - Year 'Round!

Spring is traditionally the time of year to do a thorough cleaning of the house and dispose of things that cluttered the house all winter.

Prince William County's Department of Public Works plans on assisting your clean up efforts again this spring with dumpsters available at locations around the county.

A change in plans comes this year! Neighborhood Services realizes that the opportunity for citizens to clean out clutter occurs all year around. To accommodate citizens,



Clean up ingenuity in China to help you sweep your street! Image compliments of www.frostfirezoo.com.

County Clean Ups will occur on the first Saturday of the months from April through October. As we transition to a new way of conducting the clean ups, two additional dates will be held this year in April and June.

In the last issue of the *Neighborhood News*, the issue of junk in the yard was discussed. It is in violation of the County ordinances to allow piles of debris, trash and clutter to remain in the public view around residences and commercial properties. The County Clean Ups are sponsored by Public Works to assist residents with disposal of debris, trash and clutter that isn't

(See *Clean Up*, page 3)

New Website Coming Soon!

The Prince William County government web site is undergoing an extensive re-design. The re-design will result in a web easier for citizens to use.

The new web site is to be unveiled around April 15. We welcome your comments! Additional changes will be made based on the feedback we receive. Please let us know what you think by emailing nsd@pwcgov.org.

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Prince William County... Partnering With Communities

Sponsored by the Department of Public Works
Prince William County Government

**Foreclosures and Vacant Homes
Plague Neighborhoods**

The news media has documented quite well the explosion of homes that have gone into foreclosure in Prince William County in the past year. An unfortunate convergence of factors has made Prince William the epicenter of foreclosures in the area. At the same time that a tremendous number of new homes were coming on the market in our county, easy credit was being extended. Too many owners could not meet their ballooning mortgages, resulting in defaults and takeovers by lenders.

The Numbers

Estimates of the percentage of PWC homes in foreclosure were around 2.2% at the end of 2007. The *Washington Post* reported on March 23, 2008 that the rate was 5.5%.

The table titled “Foreclosures, 2007” shows the increase, by month. Going from 98 to 726 homes in foreclosure is significant, about twice what the next Northern Virginia county is experiencing. The Dumfries, Sudley, Manassas, Woodbridge and Dale City areas have more than 3.0% foreclosures as a percentage of total parcels.

Foreclosures, 2007	
Month	Count
January	98
February	122
March	117
April	143
May	172
June	205
July	206
August	237
September	226
October	257
November	316
December	726

Impacts on Neighborhoods

The families displaced by this trend are easy to forget when what is seen are numbers, not faces. Also ignored are the impacts in the neighborhoods where so many homes are empty. Some families left belongings and trash behind when they moved. In addition to the trash, the empty homes are potential targets for vandalism, inhabitation by the homeless, and criminal activities. Other cities around the nation that have been hit hard by foreclosures have seen homes stripped of appliances, cabinetry, and copper piping in *minutes* after residents departed.

With the onset of warm weather and growth of vegetation, the properties not under care will have tall grass. Unkempt lawns detract from the appearance of a neighborhood, but also provide habitat for unwanted pests and associated human health problems.

In the cases where owners are able to continue to make their mortgage payments but are caught with high rates or are in a ‘negative equity’ situation, they may be less able to maintain their homes or make any improvements. Negative equity may require that residents remain in their homes for quite some time. This could be beneficial over the long term, if owners possess a sense of pride of ownership. Without this sense of pride, however, many properties will decline in appearance and value.

Appropriate Actions

If all this gives you a feeling of urgency, it should. Neighborhoods that lack diligence in maintaining appearances could experience increased crime, individual feelings of helplessness, slow recuperation of property value and more. There are actions that can be taken to counter the downward trend.

Open the lines of communication in your neighborhood. If you don’t know your neighbor, now is a perfect opportunity to exchange phone numbers or email addresses. Start sending messages around when a home needs to have an eye kept on it. Help each other keep up your homes and yards. Organize social activities to increase interaction. Remember, you don’t have to be best friends with your neighbors but you do share the best interest of the neighborhood.

If you don’t take action, who will? The County can provide assistance if you’d like to know more about recapturing that sense of community in your neighborhood. PWC’s Neighborhood Coordinator is available to work with you and other interested neighbors to develop an action plan to address concerns and to build community.

(See Foreclosures, page 3)

2008 County Clean Up Schedule

Dates	Locations
April 5	Dale City Boys & Girls Club, 5070 Dale Blvd, Woodbridge VA 22193
April 12**	Marumsco Plaza, 13901 Jefferson Davis Hwy, Woodbridge VA 22191
May 3	Irongate/Westgate - 8300 Community Drive, Manassas VA 20109 and near 8000 Community Drive, Manassas VA 20109
June 7	Sudley Elementary School, 9744 Copeland Drive, Manassas VA 20109
June 14**	Town of Quantico
July 5	Marumsco Plaza, 13901 Jefferson Davis Hwy, Woodbridge VA 22191
Aug. 2	Dale City Boys & Girls Club, 5070 Dale Blvd, Woodbridge VA 22193
Sept. 6	Yorkshire - Emmanuel Baptist Church, 8006 Centreville Road at Spruce Street, Manassas VA
Oct. 4	Marumsco Plaza, 13901 Jefferson Davis Hwy, Woodbridge VA 22191

(Clean Ups, from page 1)

appropriate for normal refuse collection. It is assumed that everyone reading this newsletter most likely doesn't have clutter stored improperly, but won't you let your neighbors know about the opportunities?

Some neighborhoods request copies of the flier announcing the County Clean Ups and distribute them in their communities. (See the back page.) Quantities of fliers can be requested from Neighborhood Services at 703-792-7018. Active communities can help by arranging for residents with pick up trucks to help move larger items to the dumpsters for those who don't have such vehicles.

Staff from the Litter Crew and Solid Waste will be on hand to help citizens remove items from their vehicles and get them into the dumpsters. Hazardous materials cannot be accepted but appliances, tires and other items can be accepted. If you have questions about the acceptability of items at the County Clean Ups, please contact Neighborhood Services.

(Foreclosures, from page 2)

Consider starting Neighborhood Watch or be vigilant on your own. Call the police when you see trucks and workers at a vacant home and other suspicious activity. PWC's Neighborhood Watch program can help with crime prevention. The program has documented success in our communities.

It is well established that governments are not able to legislate or deliver the care needed to draw individuals together as a community. But resource assistance is available from staff who know what it takes and how to find the resources needed to achieve a close-knit community. Once neighbors know each other, the group is better armed to spread the word about nearby crimes, watch over empty houses and welcome newcomers. Take advantage of this economic down cycle to better position your neighborhood. Call the Neighborhood Coordinator at 703-792-6892 for more information about community building, or the PD Crime Prevention Unit at 703-792-7270. Remember, Prince William County "partners with communities."

Visit Neighborhood Services on the Web at www.pwcgov.org

2008 County Clean Up Calendar

It's time to get rid of all of that clutter!

Bring your trash, old furniture, small appliances and stuff that you just don't have room to store to one of our monthly clean ups. Open-top containers will be available for you to dispose of your clutter. County clean ups are held from 8:00am until 2:00pm. Residents are invited to make use of this service at **any** location. Keep this calendar, or refer to our web site at www.pwcgov.org/junk. Think of the First Saturday of the month as clean up day!

Support the campaign to make Prince William the cleanest county in Virginia

Clean Up Prince William!

2008 Dates & Locations of First Saturday County Clean Ups

- April 5 - Dale City Boys & Girls Club
- April 12** - Marumsco Plaza
- May 3 - Irongate/Westgate
- June 7 - Sudley Elementary School
- June 14** -Town of Quantico
- July 5 - Marumsco Plaza
- August 2 - Dale City Boys & Girls Club
- September 6 - Yorkshire
- October 4 - Marumsco Plaza

**Second Saturdays

Call 703-792-7018 for specific locations or visit www.pwcgov.org/junk

Sorry, but we **cannot accept** fuel tanks, motor oil, fuel drums, household hazardous waste, antifreeze, paint thinners, pesticides, pool chemicals, or commercial waste. These items can be disposed at the PWC Landfill. Please call 703-792-5750.

¿Preguntas? No dudes en llamarnos para más detalle: 703-792-7018

Organize a Neighborhood Clean Up or Adopt-A-Spot in your community!
Call the PW Clean Community Council at 703-792-6272 for more information.

For more information, please call 703-792-7018