

Neighborhood News



January/February 2009

Volume V, Issue 1

Conference Focus is Economic Impacts on Neighborhoods

Over 8,000 foreclosures were recorded in 2008 in Prince William County and the cities of Manassas and Manassas Park. The Prince William Association of Realtors forecasts the number to balloon to 12,000 new foreclosures in 2009. The impacts of foreclosures range from litter and tall grass to vandalism and arson, all of which degrade neighborhood appearance, property values and the quality of life. Neighborhoods will need information about available resources and self-help strategies to order to preserve their communities.

The 2009 Prince William Neighborhood Conference, scheduled for Saturday, Feb. 7, will offer residents the information needed to deal with community maintenance issues in the current economic climate. The conference is a joint effort by Prince William County, the City of Manassas and the City of Manassas Park. It will be held in the James J. McCoart and Development Services Buildings from 8:30 a.m. until 3:30

(See Conference, page 2)

Urgent Note!

The *Neighborhood News* will be available electronically **ONLY** for most issues. Please go to www.pwcgov.org/eNotifications to make sure you do not miss an issue.

Neighborhood Leaders Produce Guidance, Mission Statement

The Neighborhood Leaders Group brings together residents interested in neighborhood improvement and county staff responsible for preventing deterioration in neighborhoods. The main activities of the group are to strategize solutions for neighborhood issues, learn about property maintenance codes and implement action plans intended to improve neighborhoods. The group has solidified its reason for meeting in a mission statement and research, learning and discussions have resulted in publications useful to other county residents seeking to improve the quality of life in PWC neighborhoods.

Information about the group is available at their web page on the Prince William County web site, www.pwcgov.org/neighborhoodleaders. The Neighborhood Leaders Group meets monthly on different nights of the week. The [Schedule of Meetings](#), linked from the Leaders web page, shows

(See Leaders, page 2)

Inside this issue...

Conference Class Offerings	Page 3
Over Occupancy Proposed Zoning Text Amendment	Page 4

Prince William County... Partnering With Communities

Sponsored by the Department of Public Works
Prince William County Government

(Conference, continued from page 1)

p.m. Registration is required; the fee of \$25 includes breaks, a box lunch and conference materials.

Classes are designed for individuals from neighborhoods without a condominium or homeowners association and those with an association. Attendees have their choice between two tracks for each of four sessions. One track concentrates on neighborhood improvement and will be of interest to both types of communities. The other track is for the unique needs of common interest communities. Tracks are only a suggestion; feel free to select the class that best meets your needs.

In addition to the classes and the opportunity to network with others dealing with similar neighborhood issues, the conference will offer the attendee the chance to visit with exhibitors during the lunch time. The Gang Response Intervention Team (G.R.I.T.) and Neighborhood Watch from each sponsoring jurisdiction will help you with crime prevention initiatives on your block or neighborhood. The Citizen Corps, volunteers trained to respond to emergency situations, is recruiting for its next training cycle. Habitat for Humanity's Brush with Kindness program helps income-eligible households with exterior improvements. The Lake Ridge/Occoquan Communities Civic Association will be on hand to describe their involvement in the community. The full list of exhibitor includes fire prevention, planning/zoning and much more!

Classes are described in detail beginning on page 3. A registration form is available at www.pwcgov.org/neighborhoodconference. If you can't access the web site, please call us at 703-792-7018 so that we can mail a form to you.

Please note that there are no refunds after January 23, but someone else can attend in your place. Should there be



Neighborhood Conference 2008 attendees question speaker Craig Gerhart, Prince William County Executive

(Leaders, from page 1)

dates and locations; meeting topics are added after the agenda has been set at the previous meeting.

The group began meeting in June of 2008 with the first meetings concentrated on sharing strategies for neighborhood improvements and learning about ordinances. After evaluating the usefulness of the meetings, the group adopted a [Mission Statement](#). The group continues to learn from county staff and disseminates the information to others in their neighborhoods. The development of a strategic plan is in progress.

Inspectors and Intake Techs from Property Code Enforcement, Neighborhood Services, have made presentations to the Neighborhood Leaders. Some of the Leaders took advantage of an audioconference sponsored by the International City/County Managers Association to learn "The Power of Community Building." In the future, other County staff and local experts will be invited to speak on zoning, volunteers, real estate, planning, legal processes and more.

The group welcomes any other residents who work to improve their communities. Contact Neighborhood Services at 703-792-7018 to receive meeting announcements.

Neighbors Talking to Neighbors Builds Community Pride

Conference Classes Designed to Prepare Neighborhoods to Meet Challenges in a Down Economy

Neighborhood Improvement Track (of interest to all neighborhoods)

Session One, "Dealing with Vacant and Blighted Properties"

This class moves from a discussion of conditions existing in our neighborhoods to the local responses to the foreclosed and vacant homes predicament. Learn the extent to which your neighborhood is affected and the kinds of actions that are being taken to counter the impacts. You'll also learn the tools that are within your control to prevent deterioration in your neighborhood.

Session Two, "Spotlighting Successful Communities"

How have some communities avoided deterioration and have such good participation in neighborhood projects? Hear it straight from the neighborhood leaders who have been successful at maintaining their communities' appearance and sustaining community involvement. The panel will share their techniques and have time for Q and A.

Session Three, "Resolving Conflicts"

Presented by George Mason University's Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, this session will make your conversations with neighbors on difficult topics more successful. As residents strive to improve the quality of life, invariably there will come a time when it is necessary to request that a neighbor clean up a yard, quiet a barking dog or change any number of behaviors that degrade the neighborhood. GMU's conflict experts will show you how to approach neighbors to gain compliance while maintaining harmony.

Session Four, "Partnering with Local Government"

Your local neighborhood services



Neighborhood Conference 2008 attendees question speaker Craig Gerhart, Prince William County Executive

staffs will offer ways that residents can work with government to improve your neighborhood. Representatives from the county and the cities of Manassas and Manassas Park will present services available to citizens and describe the synergistic effects when citizens partner with local government.

Common Interest Community Track (of interest to HOAs and condominiums)

Session One, "HOA/Condo Financial Management in a Down Economy"

Experienced community managers present this session to help you develop an 'action item' list for your association's financial health. Do you know the warning signs that the association's finances are deteriorating? Delinquent fees and foreclosures, tapping into reserves to cover operating expenses, and dwindling replacement funds pose challenges for community associations. This session will present ideas for policy, procedures, notices, payment plans and possible association reactions to non-payment of fees to sustain

Join the Neighborhood Leaders Group; www.pwcgov.org/neighborhoodleaders

Proposed Changes to Over Occupancy Zoning Ordinance

When too many people occupy a home, there are potential safety issues. Most serious of these issues is that of fire. Without sufficient ways for all the occupants to leave a structure that is on fire, the possibility of injury or loss of life is increased.

The county enforces an ordinance to prevent such harm to residents due to over occupancy, or “overcrowding” as some people refer to it. The ordinance (available at www.municode.com) currently includes the various combinations of family and non-family that can live as a single housekeeping unit. Extended families, however, can have numerous members. The possibility exists that there could be more people than can safely exit the home in the event of a fire.

Last fall, Neighborhood Services tasked a consulting group with researching possible changes to the zoning ordinance based on the safety and health of residents. The result is a proposed change to the ordinance that would limit numbers of adult inhabitants (18 years of age and older) by the square footage of the house and by Building Maintenance Codes. For example, a home with 1501 to 2000 square feet would have a limit of 5 adults, given proper square footage for bedrooms, living and dining area.

The Planning Commission has passed the proposed change; the Prince William Board of County Supervisors will consider it sometime this spring or summer. If you would like more details on the proposed text, please contact Neighborhood Services at nsd@pwcgov.org or 703-792-7018. If you have opinions about the change, you should consider contacting your District Supervisor.

your association while waiting for the flow of association fee money to resume.

Session Two, “The Roles of Association Owners, Boards and Management Companies”

As an HOA or condo owner, have you ever been frustrated by what you see is a lack of action by your Board or association manager? Are you a board member that is unsure of your responsibilities? Learn from this panel of speakers representing owners, board members and association managers and pose your questions about the responsibilities of each role. This is one issue where information goes a long way to promote harmony in the community.

Session Three, “Covenant and Rule Enforcement”

Property maintenance is required by covenants and rules, but is often postponed when money is tight. Bad economic times are precisely when properties need to be maintained. Certainly, rules and guidelines of all kinds need to be enforced and this session will help you understand how to do so effectively and fairly without disrupting personal relationships.

Session Four, “The Impact of New Virginia Regulations on Common Interest Communities”

Are you aware of the financial consequences of ignoring the new regulations passed by the Virginia General Assembly last year? The responsibility of understanding and complying with the regulations belongs to the Board of Directors. Make sure your association knows what it has to do by attending this class taught by a prominent community association attorney.

Please contact Neighborhood Services at 703-792-7018 or nsd@pwcgov.org for more information.

For more information, please call 703-792-7018