President’s Report
—Dick Podolske

Dear Brookdale residents,

Since the issuance of the last Brookdale Bugle in September, I am pleased to report on a number of activities in our neighborhood. This note briefly summarizes these successful developments.

Brookdale Directory. We are very pleased that, after a many-year lapse, we finally have produced a new Brookdale Directory. This Directory provides, with the concurrence of Brookdale residents, their preferred phone numbers, cell phone numbers, email addresses, and the names of persons living at each residence.

Producing this document has required a considerable amount of work involving all of the four Brookdale vice presidents and several block captains. The Brookdale Executive Committee wishes to especially thank Amy and Paul Rispin for their tireless efforts in compiling and editing this document and Michael Oliwa for his final design of the Directory. If for any reason you have not received this directory please contact Judy Rivlin at jrivlin@ymail.com.

While every attempt has been made to make the Directory as accurate as possible, we encourage you to notify us of any errors and additionally to inform us of any new residents in the Brookdale neighborhood. Any corrections or additions should be sent to Amy Rispin at amy.rispin@verizon.net. We are going to make a concerted effort to keep the Directory entries up to date.

Brookdale at Home. Our Brookdale at Home events are proving to be an unqualified success. The concept is to encourage informal socialization among neighbors, to discuss matters affecting our neighborhood, and to share the experiences of our [See Presidents Report, page 2]

Santa Comes to Westbard
—Bob Cope

Plans to redevelop Westbard, an issue that has generated much discussion in Brookdale, are moving ahead. The Montgomery County Planning Board has completed its work on the Westbard Sector Plan and has transmitted its proposed plan to the county council.

The county council will hold a public hearing the last week of January. The public is invited to attend and tell the county council what they like and dislike about the plan. Committee hearings will then be held in February and March and a final vote is scheduled for the end of March.

Shortly thereafter the commercial lots in Westbard will be rezoned in conformance with the plan and property owners will then begin filing site plan applications seeking permission to proceed with construction. Since the housing market is fairly hot, things will move quickly, and of course Equity One has always indicated it is anxious to redo the Giant site.

So what will be built? Well, Santa came early. We will need to wait and see what the county council will do, but in the past the county council has made only minor changes to planning board recommendations. Unfortunately the planning board was fairly aggressive in its recommendations, and here they are.

For the most part the planning board has recommended that all non-industrial properties in Westbard be rezoned CRT, which stands for Commercial Residential Town. In other words, each CRT lot can contain a commercial and residential component (a mixed-use zone). The following properties have been rezoned CRT:

The Giant site is rezoned CRT with a height of 60 feet. Basically the retail on the Giant site will be trebled with 60-foot housing in the rear.

The lots across the street from Giant will be rezoned CRT and will be high-rise in nature.

The old Westwood 2 shopping center will be rezoned CRT with a height of 90 feet, but the site will be reduced in size since Ridgefield Road will be realigned to curve directly into Westbard.

The HOC (Housing Opportunity Commission) will construct a 75-foot building on the HOC parking lot that is directly across from the entrance to Giant that is nearest to Ridgefield. The HOC will also construct another 75-foot building on the parking lot that is in front of its existing high-rise building. The HOC will also construct a structured parking lot to the rear of the existing building since the parking lots in front of the building will be eliminated.

[See Westbard, page 3]
many interesting residents. Our biggest challenge is not a lack of interest but the capacity of homes to accommodate those who wish to attend the events. Nevertheless we want to continue to hold these events in homes as it helps to strengthen our community spirit.

Since the issuance of the last Bugle, Professor Michael Hudson hosted a meeting in November to discuss issues in the Middle East and Ambassador Richard Erdman hosted a meeting in December on why the UN matters. (See separate articles on these two events).

Amy Rispin is scheduled to host a meeting Jan. 21 on the topic of our Amish neighbors in southern Maryland and their quilts. We intend to continue scheduling these events on a monthly basis. Ideas for topics and offers to host are most welcome.

**Halloween Party.** As usual, Dan Byerly and his team arranged for a very entertaining and well attended Halloween event in the Brookdale Park. Beyond the party festivities, many neighborhood residents got into the spirit of the holiday with well decorated spooky homes. Eric Sanne and Judy Rivlin on Westport won the competition for the “Spookiest” house.

**Keeping Ablrest of Brookdale Activities.** Those of you would like to know what is going on in the neighborhood and also wish to be advised of upcoming events are encouraged to sign up for the Yahoo Brookdale site. This site has become our primary source of sharing information within Brookdale given that the Bugle is published only three times a year. Those of you who wish to attend the Brookdale at Home events are especially encouraged to sign up for this site as the limited spaces for attending these events are quickly taken. (See the separate article on how to set up a Yahoo Brookdale account on page 3.)

**Brookdale Dues.** As mentioned in my last report, it is important to remember that the activities of the Brookdale Citizens’ Association are dependent upon voluntary contributions from residents of Brookdale.

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**Update on Pepco Construction**

—Bill McCluskey

Pepco has mostly completed the highway-disrupting portion of its project to update the 1940s-era electric substation on Wisconsin Avenue near Harrison Street in the District.

The project is designed to “enhance system reliability...and reduce the potential for power outages,” Pepco says in its latest fact sheet.

The digging that had been on River Road and Western Avenue in Brookdale has now moved to Wisconsin Avenue in the District.

Pepco said: “[W]e are installing a new underground cable to supply additional capacity to the substation. We will be performing work in the 4600–5200 blocks of Wisconsin Ave. as part of this effort...until March 31, 2016. Crews will be working in the right south bound lane during the hours of 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. There will be occasional Saturday work during the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Street parking will be limited on Wisconsin Avenue between Garrison Street and 44th Street.”

Cable installation and splicing will occur on Western, Jenifer, and Wisconsin from July until November.

The electrical load from the existing substation will be transferred to a temporary adjoining site, which had been the Paul Brothers auto showroom and more recently Classic Motors. The showroom has been demolished.

Moving out the old and installing new equipment on the sites is expected to take from June 2016 to October 2017, and then the load will be transferred back to the existing substation and the temporary site will be restored. It is expected to be re-developed.

Our records indicate that less than 40 percent of Brookdale residents are up to date with dues to the Association. Please consider paying dues of $30 as indicated on the envelope enclosed with this Bugle if you haven’t already paid your dues for the period of June 1, 2015 through May 30, 2016.

If you are uncertain as to whether you are up to date with your dues please send an email to Amy Rispin, treasurer, at amy.rispin@verizon.net to find out your current status. Thank you in advance for your assistance on this matter.

**Proposed Brookdale Historic District.** A Brookdale at Home event was held at the home of Richard Podolske Oct. 15 to discuss the possible creation of a historic district within Brookdale focusing on Cooper Lightbown designed homes. The historical district, if approved, would cover approximately 155 homes in Brookdale North and Brookdale South within the approximately 375 homes in the overall Brookdale neighborhood.

This initiative was proposed by Jim Norton based on a study conducted by Clare Kelly of the Montgomery County Planning Department a few years ago. Ms. Kelly made a presentation and answered questions from those present at the meeting. It was clear from this meeting that some persons present were in favor of creating the district, some needed more information and/or convincing arguments to support the proposal, and some were clearly against.

It was agreed that to create the proposed district an overwhelming percentage of the residents within the proposed district would need to support the proposal to make this a reality. Given this observation, it was concluded that a substantial and sustained effort would be required to “sell” this proposal and, without this effort, the proposed district would not come to fruition.

The Brookdale Citizens’ Association is neither supporting nor opposing this effort. However, Denise Holmes and Jim Norton have expressed interest in trying to advance the matter.
[Westbard, from page 1]

Thus the Housing Opportunity Commission will control or otherwise operate three high-rise buildings (including the one already there). There is talk that the HOC may flip one of the buildings to Equity One.

There will be a 110-foot building on the bowling alley and adjoining gas station.

Another 110-foot building will be constructed behind the Park Bethesda apartment building, which is the massive building located south of the bowling alley as you drive toward Massachusetts Avenue.

Seventy-five-foot buildings will be constructed on the Park Bethesda parking lots with 35-foot townhouses adjoining the existing townhouses that run to Massachusetts Avenue.

The county will be given the opportunity in the future, if it desires, to file a rezoning application for the library site, which would permit it to build a 60-foot HOC building on the library site. The library would be located on the first two floors of the building. This would bring the total number of HOC buildings in Westbard to four.

The question is whether this makes any sense. This six-story building will be the first commercial building constructed on Massachusetts Avenue, which up to this time has always been a single-family residential street. And, if more HOC housing is needed, why not just add a few more floors to the two new HOC buildings that have been proposed for the HOC site?

The old Manor Care property on Ridgefield Road will be rezoned CRT with a height of 55 feet.

Santa did not forget River Road. All lots adjoining River Road will be rezoned CRT with a height of 75 feet.

The Episcopal School on Landy Lane will be rezoned CRT with a height of 55 feet.

Most of the industrial areas on Butler and Dorsey and Clipper will retain their industrial zoning, although a few of the properties (such as those behind McDonald’s) will have the right in the future to file rezoning applications seeking a new CRT zone with a height of 75 feet.

And so, what did Santa bring for the community? Well, there’s Festivus for the rest of us. The gift to the community, other than a few more cars on the roads, is a couple small parks, but the biggest gift is beautification (sort of naturalization) of the Willett Creek, which runs through Westbard. The Little Falls Watershed Alliance sees this as a big deal, and so this is a real amenity. (See separate article, p. 5.)

And so, if you like this stuff, let the county council know. If you don’t, then let them know that also. Keep in mind, this deal is over by the end of March.

Work on River Road to Continue

—Bill McCloskey

When will River Road be a road and not a construction site? There is an expression: “You should live so long.” Can you make it until 2017 (weather permitting)?

Repaving of River Road from the Beltway to Western Avenue has now has moved from a candidate project to an approved one for fiscal year 2017, which starts on July 1, 2016.

No start date has been assigned. Christopher Bishop of the State Highway Administration told the Bugle. The deadline to submit bids for the work was in May and the successful bidder will be given the nod to proceed in mid-July of 2016. Closer to home, the sidewalk and $825,000 lane configuration on River from Ventnor Road to Baltimore Avenue in Green Acres is behind schedule. Supposed to be completed by late spring 2016, it is now targeted to be done in late fall 2016 (weather permitting).

Crews are working now on sidewalk modifications and will then move to widen eastbound (inbound to D.C) River to add a left turn lane onto Willard Avenue. Traffic signals at Willard Avenue/Greenway Drive will be upgraded with brighter bulbs, countdown displays and audible pedestrian signals. This crosswalk work is on target for completion by year-end 2016. Then it shall all be paved. Until then, there will be daytime lane closures. When the widening and resurfacing begins, some work will also be done overnight between 9 p.m. and 5 a.m.

Bishop may be reached at cbishop@sha.state.md.us.

How to Join the Brookdale Yahoo! Group

—Dave Montgomery

Join our Yahoo! Group by following these simple instructions: Go to the website at http://groups.yahoo.com/groups/BrookdaleCitizens

You should see instructions to join the group, BrookdaleCitizens. You may already have a Yahoo account; e.g., you might be a member of another Yahoo Group. If so, you can use your existing account and add BrookdaleCitizens.

If you do not have a Yahoo account you will have to open one. Please note that you do not have to use a Yahoo email address; any email address is acceptable. Just complete a “profile” of personal information by following Yahoo’s instructions. Once the account is established, select BrookdaleCitizens as a new group.

If you do not want to submit a profile, you may join a “mailing list” without a Yahoo account. That option means that you will receive the messages sent to the BrookdaleCitizens list but you will not be allowed to post your own message.

Full subscribers may post messages by sending an email to brookdalecitizens@yahoogroups.com

Since this is a private group an association officer will approve your membership.

Brookdale Bugle
Erdman Discusses Diplomatic Career

—Jack Morton

On Dec. 10, Ambassador Richard Erdman and his gracious wife Sibyl hosted December’s Brookdale at Home event at their lovely home on Murray Road. The event was attended by more than 25 Brookdale neighbors, who enjoyed good company, wine, appetizers, desserts, holiday decorations, and a thoughtful presentation and discussion on the function and relevance of the United Nations.

Ambassador Erdman, a retired career diplomat with over 40 years of diplomatic service, and who continues to serve part-time as a U.S. representative and advisor to the United States Mission to the United Nations, reflected upon his assignments in Turkey, Cyprus, Lebanon, and the Balkans, among other areas.

Ambassador Erdman then transitioned to his more recent roles at the United Nations and brought the audience up to speed on how the United Nations is structured, its core functions, and most importantly why it is relevant in an ever-changing international political environment.

After a lively question-and-answer period covering not just the United Nations but current events in the Middle East, guests were led on a tour of Ambassador Erdman’s art collection – pieces collected throughout his travels and his own personal paintings. Who knew that in our midst Brookdale neighbors had both a world-class diplomat and an accomplished artist!

Hudson Reflects on Middle East

—Tamar Nicolson

On December 10, the Brookdale at Home series hosted its third event at the home of Mike Hudson. Mike is Professor Emeritus of International Relations and Arab Studies at Georgetown University. It is worthwhile noting that the event was catered by Shemali’s, a small Palestinian/Lebanese shop off of Foxhall Road, which serves fabulous Middle Eastern delicacies, and is a shop that Mike has frequented for many years.

As one can imagine, the conversation was both lively and wide-ranging including discussions about ISIS, the war in Yemen, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It was an overall delightful evening for all who participated; more than 35 people were there.

GEICO Fence Update

—Bob Banach

If you have been following the emails over the last few months, you’ll know that GEICO had planned to replace the wood fence along its Willard Avenue parking lot that abuts a portion of Brookdale with a black metal fence. But resident Vanessa Brown had obtained the 1967 agreement between GEICO and the neighbors along the parking lot and the neighborhood associations, which clearly states it must be a wood fence.

Since the document is nearly 50 years old, it was not readily available to the GEICO legal department so they appreciated our sharing the document with them. They agreed it is authentic and therefore stopped their plan to replace the wood fence with a metal one.

They still had the same goal, however, to stop vandals from breaking the fence and to enhance security for their associates using the Willard Avenue parking lot, so GEICO decided to reinforce the wood fence on the parking lot side by installing the black metal fence behind the wood one.

Since children may try to climb the fence, they are installing a curved spoke top, which will be visible above the wood fence to ensure no one is impaled on the fence. It should also discourage anyone from trying to break through the fence since they will know their path is blocked by a metal fence. GEICO asked us to remind residents that there are paths through the park and the smoking hut already and that GEICO is steadfast in its opposition to more paths through the fenced parking area.

While this resolution preserves the wood fence to block the view of the parking lot, some residents do not like the metal fence protruding above the wood fence. Others find the new fence attractive, especially where it replaced an old chain link fence. GEICO will be repairing the broken portions of the wood fence and replace the areas that have graffiti.

Please be sure to report any suspicious activity or graffiti along the fence by calling GEICO’s security office at 301-986-2100 or 2121.

Thanks to Vanessa Brown for sharing the document and to GEICO for honoring its prior agreement once being made aware of it.

Board Seeks Help from Long-term Residents

If you followed the GEICO fence issue (see article above) you will be aware that a long-term resident’s having kept a 1967 agreement was the key to keeping the wood fence to block the view of the Willard Avenue parking lot from backyards and the ends of Baltimore, Saratoga and Sherrill.

To that end, the Board is asking other long-term residents to see if they hold any old documents and share them with your neighborhood VP so the documents can be added to the Brookdale Yahoo Group repository so future residents will have access to them.
Most Brookdale residents know that a commercial developer plans to redevelop the Westbard Shopping Center and five neighboring properties, and that the area’s “Sector Plan” is being revised by the county to update urban planning objectives and building codes. But few folks know that a creek flows through the middle of that area: the hidden Willett Branch.

Willett Branch is a true creek; it originates from natural springs (now underground) north of Bradley Boulevard and it emerges in woods behind the Bethesda Pool. The creek meanders between Somerset and Kenwood neighborhoods, behind the Whole Foods parking lot, and flows under River Road at the Ridgefield Road intersection.

The Westbard Sector has long been an industrial area and here the Willett Branch creek has been neglected and abused for years. Old development codes allowed commercial buildings, parking lots and retaining walls built to the edge of the creek. Graffiti and trash dumps abound. In addition, the Willett Branch is almost completely inaccessible to the public; it is hidden behind commercial properties, imprisoned by fencing and walls, choked with invasive weeds, and some sections are even buried underground in culvert tunnels.

Decades ago, most of the creek was lined with concrete, which essentially kills those areas of the creek. When disconnected from groundwater, soil and vegetation, there is no habitat to support aquatic life. Surrounded by acres of parking lots and street pavement, the run-off from storms directs torrents of polluted storm water to the Willett. Of course, conditions and activities at this part of the creek affect the water quality downstream in the creek, the Potomac River, and the Chesapeake Bay.

Yet, there is a possibility for renewal for the Willett Branch. The county’s Westbard Sector Plan proposes a Willett Branch Urban Greenway, a lovely green ribbon of parkland created by a 100-foot tree-lined stream buffer along both sides of the creek. This new community park would include pathways for walking and biking, eventually linking to the Capitol Crescent trail for improved connections in the community. The plan also removes the concrete lining for a naturalized creek bed to restore habitat and improve water quality.

The County Parks Department is already on board with potential funding sources, planning, maintenance commitments, etc. There are creative and exciting plans to make the Willett Branch Urban Greenway a major amenity for the community.

However, this will not happen without considerable support from neighbors. The Westbard Sector Plan must still be approved by the county council and the county executive, so it is still vulnerable to changes and weakened protections for parkland and the creek. Already, the developers are seeking changes. They are opposing the 100-foot stream buffer (standard protections for creeks in new development) and they got language inserted into the Sector Plan that “stream buffer areas may be modified and/or reduced.”

Such waivers are often granted for development, even in direct opposition to the community’s position or strong environmental reasoning. While the condition of the creek certainly speaks for itself, the Willett Branch doesn’t have a voice.

For more information:
The County Council has scheduled a public hearing on the Westbard Sector Plan for Jan. 26, and will vote on it soon after. Advocates for new parkland, trails, and improved conditions for the creek are urging residents to write to councilman Roger Berliner and other members of the council.

If you are curious to learn more about the creek or what you can do to help, please let Mikel Moore know (mikelymoore@yahoo.com) and visit the Little Falls Watershed Alliance website at LFWA.org. There is a virtual tour of the creek with photos, plus links to the County Planning staff documents and presentation. For some terrific maps, visuals and information on the plans for parkland in the Westbard Sector, click on the Planning Department’s power point presentation from Worksession #3 on Dec. 3, 2015, and scroll down to “Parks, Trails and Open Space Recommendations.”

The Little Falls Watershed Alliance is planning Willett Branch creek walks and an evening presentation of the Environmental Plans by county staff. Dates will be set soon; of course everyone is welcome!

Mikel Moore is a board member of the Little Falls Watershed Alliance.
Real Estate Report
—Phyllis Wiesenfelder

Real Estate Activity since Sept. 1 in the neighborhood:

Under Contract
• A colonial at 4614 Harrison St. with 4 bedrooms, 4 baths and built in 1938. It was listed for $1,095,000.
• A renovated and expanded colonial at 5107 Westport Rd. with 4 bedrooms, 4 ½ baths and built in 1961. It was originally listed for $1,399,000

SOLD
• A colonial at 4709 Dover Rd. with 3 bedrooms, 2 ½ baths and built in 1936 was listed for $849,000 and sold for $845,000.

FOR RENT
• 5307 Baltimore Ave. for $3,900/month. It has 4 bedrooms and 3 ½ baths.

Phyllis Wiesenfelder, Long & Foster Real Estate, Inc.
Office: 301-907-7600  Mobile: 301-529-3896

Transitions

Moves:
Barbara and Norman Knopf have moved after 40-some years in Brookdale. Now living at 4701 Overbrook Rd. are Kari Swenson and Ken Foster, with daughter Ayla Foster (a sixth grader at Westland) and son Jack Foster (a second grader at Westbrook). The family previously lived on Jamestown Road.

Bob, Krista, Jacob, and Emily Sweet are renting the Jones' house (4803 Dover Ct.), as Paul Jones is now the ambassador in Warsaw.

Stewart and Erica Crosland are now residing at 4709 Dover Rd. They moved there after living in D.C. for several years. Stewart is from Bethesda and Erica is from Dallas.

Extra Light at Western and Cortland
—Bob Banach

Many residents who walk home from the Metro or movies or shops along Wisconsin Avenue have commented on how dark the sidewalk can be. To help, for several years Lord & Taylor has been illuminating the Western Avenue side of its building with large floodlights, and GEICO turned on the lights for its sign on Western Avenue and installed a security camera focused on its property perimeter.

At the time the board accomplished those tasks, several attempts were made to have the bus shelter advertisements illuminated to provide some additional light, but these efforts were unsuccessful until this fall. Staff members working for Montgomery County Councilmember Roger Berliner introduced our request to D.C. Councilmember Mary Cheh and her staff.

Since all the bus shelters along Western Avenue in Brookdale are actually in the District, Councilmember Cheh’s staff helped us succeed. The bus shelter at Cortland and Western at Brookdale’s entrance is now illuminated. Thanks are due to both councilmembers and their staffs for their efforts on behalf of Brookdale.