



# Hallcrest Herald



April 2017

## President's Report

### NEW SALES RECORDS

This Spring showcased two new sales records in Hallcrest. Previously, \$685,000 was the record sales price, but recent sales of over \$690,000 established not only a new ceiling, but an intriguing example of how to prepare, stage, and show a home for a quick sale. Both homes garnered multiple competing contracts, one of which was secured even before the home was listed.

When you consider that both of these homes sold for considerably over the asking price, plus had no contingencies or home inspection "hiccups," it is well worth detailing what the owners did to achieve such astonishing results.

One home, while upgraded in many ways, still had a lower level that was in serious need of an expensive remodeling project. Thus, it was stripped down to the studs, removing the dreaded "popcorn" ceiling and old faux paneling, installed modern insulation, recessed lighting, ceramic floor tiling, upgraded electrical components, and achieved a significantly modernized approach to the adjoining patio. This home, marketed by an experienced realtor who had sold other Hallcrest homes, did all the right things to reach out to qualified buyers, as well as staging and showing the home for a quick sale after the owners had moved out.

The other home, which contracted for \$11,000 over the listed price, illustrate an even better example of "for-sale preparation." In this case, the owner set aside more than a year of showcase demonstration effort: cleaning, painting, adding small and inexpensive improvements (such as crown moldings) in addition to several years of incrementally upgrading major appliances, electrical, plumbing and HVAC systems - all the things that most home inspectors have at the top of their lists.

Thanks to Association education efforts, the owner was well aware that Virginia was in the process of establishing a license requirement for home inspectors, so it was well understood what the detail examination focus would be in the implementation stage of this new law.

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### Reminders:

*Return all trash containers  
to yards after pick up.*

*Blue recycling bins should not  
be left on the front stoop.*

*Seek AC approval before  
any changes to home's  
outside appearance.*

*Leave outside lights on  
(front & rear) on at night  
for security.*

*Pick up after your dog!*

**THANKS!**

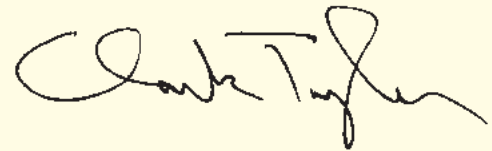
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Having done considerable research, the owner concentrated on those seemingly small things like neutral off-white painting, new air return and vents, modern lighting, dimmer switches, power washing outside walls, patio pavers, and front walkway, fresh plantings and landscaping, as well as total extra cleaning effort. It certainly paid off, showing the home in the best possible way to achieve a quick and well-priced sale.

The point is to spend sufficient time finding articles in magazines and newspapers on such things as having a selling strategy, calculating exact selling expenses, determining your home's fair market value, securing a diligent and knowledgeable realtor, staging the home, setting up showings and open houses, reviewing purchase offers, avoiding sales contingencies, seeking and taking good professional advice on negotiating and securing (hopefully) multiple contracts... all these things will achieve your goals for the best possible result. It is also a good idea to go to other community open houses and catalogue the "right ways" as well as the "wrong ways." Be sure and talk to other realtors and friends who have recently sold their homes.

These two sales demonstrate exactly how to go about preparing your home for a most happy sales result in terms of timing as well as money.



## **VOLUNTEER DAY**

Volunteer Day will be held on **Saturday, April 29**. This is when the Association is asking for volunteers to spend two hours (from 10 AM to noon) to help take care of those small tasks that are just not economic to hire out. These include painting some of the iron railings in common areas, picking up branches that may have fallen near our perimeter path (near the sound wall), spreading wood chips on that path, peeling vines off of trees in that same area, weeding some of our new flower beds, picking up trash, or putting preservative on the drainage creek bridge or the stairs at the side of 7360 Eldorado Street. We need one or two dozen willing souls to contribute to maintaining the community's pristine look. Lottery prizes are drawn at the end of the two-hours (usually for a wonderful meal at Café Tatti or a gift certificate at McLean Hardware). Teens with a need for community service hours are always welcome! Call Clark at 703-893-3336 if you can help.

We meet at 10 AM that Saturday at the maintenance shed opposite 7422 Hallcrest Drive. The Association will provide any tools or materials needed.

## **NEW COMPOST BINS**

Six new compost bins have been placed around our perimeter path, and residents have been told of the exact locations. Remember that only leaves, grass and other yard debris can go in these, and that branches, vines and twigs must go only on the brush pile near the maintenance shed.

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## COMMUNITY EVENTS FOR 2017

Hallcrest Heights is a community whose residents always look forward to a series of interesting, useful, and entertaining events – “Block Parties” the city dwellers call them.

First up is the ever-popular **Dumpster Day**. This critical event is when the Association rents two large dumpsters, placed in convenient locations at the Eldorado Oval and upper Hallcrest Drive, on **Saturday and Sunday April 22-23**. This is your chance to get rid of such things as mattresses, old appliances, furniture, picture frames, toys, boxes of old documents, broken tools, and all that stuff that clutters up your attics, closets and utility rooms. Just remember that you cannot put old paint, hazardous waste (such as insecticide, oil, cleaning liquid, etc.) car tires or batteries, in these dumpsters. Also, when the dumpsters are full their doors will be closed and you cannot leave stuff beside them.

Next, during the month of May, is when the **Architectural Control Review** will take place. A team of maintenance checkers will go around the community to note any problems on the outside of homes that need maintenance attention – overflowing gutters, rusty iron railings, peeling or distressed paint, unkempt back yards, missing wall bricks, deteriorating fences or gates, toys, tools or trash cans left outside, cable wires left dangling, overgrown trees or shrubs – those things that would in any way lessen that pristine appearance of the neighborhood. Also, be sure and take care of those things that may have been noted in a past AC review. There will be two types of problems noted: minor problems that signal future major problems, and those things that must be addressed within the next two months.

Other events that are presently in the planning stage are: the **International Cookout**, held on **Saturday, June 24 this year on the Eldorado Oval** from 1 PM until 4 PM. This is when our international residents prepare native dishes to share with neighbors, while the Association contributes hot dogs, hamburgers, soft drinks, chips and cookies.

Also in the planning stage is another **Remodeling Open House Tour** for residents to display upgrade projects for two hours on a Sunday in early July. Then there is the **Annual Meeting** on Thursday, November 2 in the fellowship hall of Lewsinsville Presbyterian Church (just across great Falls Street).

## RETAINING WALL PROGRESS

Hallcrest Heights has a 600-foot brick retaining wall parallel to the Route 123 earthen berm. The Board of Directors decided that this long and large structure should be cleaned, repaired, and sealed to preserve it from deterioration. A large number of bricks had spalled (cracked) and some of the mortar had crumbled. The Association went out to three well-qualified masonry firms and selected the lowest bidder for a three-year \$45,000 contract to secure this structure. In 200-foot increments, the firm has completed two years' worth of this job. We have been assured that this wall is now structurally sound, and next year will be completely repaired so that future Boards will not have to worry about ever having to replace it at great expense. The firm doing the work is headed by a 20-year veteran of the Army Corps of Engineers, and he has also fixed several brick walls on Hallcrest residents' patios. If you need any such masonry work done, call Robert Barry at 703-459-6620. He also does chimney work and iron railing repairs.

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## ANNUAL MEETING

Our Annual Meeting will be held on **Thursday, November 2 at 7 PM**. Unlike many Homeowner Associations, our meeting is open to all residents, not just owners. The focus is on presentations, issues, and documents that are of interest to all residents. Yes, we elect a Board of Directors for the coming year and sometimes vote on dues increases (if necessary), but the business part of the meeting is done in the first 20 minutes. The rest of the time is spent on presentations that are of great interest to all members of the community. This year, we have invited our Delegate to the General Assembly, Rip Sullivan, to moderate a panel of major utilities that are such a critical part of service to our community - Fairfax Water, Dominion Virginia Power, Washington Gas, the Fairfax Sewer System, and the Storm Water System. Considering the fact that Hallcrest is a 45 year old community, the Association has spent much time this year making sure that our infrastructure for these utilities is well planned, serviced and upgraded so that service outages do not occur unnecessarily. We have been blessed by the prompt service when problems have arisen, and it is important that residents understand the details of such service. For instance, a contractor for Washington Gas last year cut four small sections into our street to place cadmium plates over our gas mains to prevent corrosion; Fairfax Water arrived within an hour after we called to check and repair water mains on the block of Hallcrest Drive leading to Chain Bridge Road, re-paving most of that street; Dominion Virginia Power has not only repaired our 23 streetlights, but is in the process of replacing many of our main cables and connectors; the sewer and storm water systems have a regular maintenance program to thoroughly check the main pipes. All five systems are preparing a comprehensive infrastructure report for us which will be presented at the Annual Meeting. They will also answer any questions that you may have.

Other items on this year's agenda will be an Appreciation Award to someone whom the Board of Directors felt added value to our neighborhood; the budget for 2018; introduction of new Board members; distribution of important documents and articles; and, of course, a refreshment reception for all who attend.

## RE-BID ON GROUNDS CONTRACT

Our two main contracts are trash collection and grounds maintenance. We sought competitive bids several years ago for our trash collection, and saved considerable funds by selecting McLean Trash. This year, we opened up competitive bids from three well-qualified firms in the landscaping business – ones that served several other communities like ours. We prepared an RFP (Request for Proposal) and invited the three firms to come, survey, and get pertinent details of what we required in terms of service, responsiveness as well as pricing. Davey was the low bidder by \$17,000, and we adjusted our requirements for major tree work for other companies to bid on that part of our needs. The Board felt that since these items represented nearly one third of our total budget, we needed a competitive price check on value received.

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## VDOT COMES TO THE RESCUE

VDOT, which manages the narrow strip of land (owned by the Airport Authority) near our sound wall, responded quickly when several trees there threatened two or three homes nearby. They not only took down two trees immediately, but sent an arborist over to tag four other trees for removal. Their eight man crew took these trees down and cut them up, leaving a chips pile which was then spread on our perimeter path. They also will pick up the huge logs that couldn't be chipped. After that, Davey has been tasked to clean up the area and plant a nice looking oval garden of forsythia and butterfly bushes. The pictures show the VDOT crew and the resulting pile of wood chips.



The VDOT contractor's crew take down 4 threatening trees.



The resulting wood chips were spread on our perimeter path.

## LITTLE FREE LIBRARY STATUS

On New Year's Eve day, about 30 or so Hallcrest residents gathered on the Eldorado oval to celebrate the opening of our Little Free Library. This wonderful little construction was designed by Martha Suzuki, managed by Paige Saba, and constructed lovingly by Board member, Glenn Crumley. There are over 40,000 of these miniature libraries in the U.S., and they have proven to be most popular – with the slogan “Take a book, return a book.” Hallcrest residents have donated a number of books (for all ages) and have left notes commenting on certain books or types of book they would like to see there. In the planning stages are two more of these constructions, perhaps one near Dibner Park and another in the circle in Eldorado Court. The accompanying pictures show designer, Martha Suzuki and Manager Paige Saba, plus the neighbors enjoying cookies and juice. A special request asked for more children's books. If you have such books to donate, drop them off at Paige's house at 7343 Eldorado Street.



The celebrants for the new Little Free Library, enjoy its opening on New Years' eve.



The designer, Martha Suzuki (Left) and Manager, Paige Saba (right) stand by their creation.

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## CHANGES ON THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

After five-plus years of meritorious service, Glenn Crumley has retired from the Board. Glenn not only constructed the Little Free Library (and will do one or two more), but managed the very trying street repairing and resealing project two years ago, as part of his “maintenance” designation. This community owes Glenn much thanks and appreciation.

To take maximum advantage of some much-needed skills, the Board made two “alternate” designations: first it elected Susana Kyrgos as the maintenance member, with her husband Illias Spyrou to serve as alternate because of Susana’s travel schedule with the State Department.

The fortunate part of this designation comes from the backgrounds of both – Susana was trained and employed as an architect, but has transitioned into a construction engineer, while husband, Illias, studied mechanical & aeronautical engineering prior to joining the Federal government as a Senior Mechanical Engineer at the Army Research Lab. The other “alternate” designation involves Board member Claudio Ternieden (our expert in public utilities) whose wife, Marie (a PhD in education) has upgraded the Hallcrest web site and now serves as the webmaster. This community is truly fortunate to have such depth of skills on our Board, while still having only 7 members!

## NEW WEB LINK FROM HALLCRESTHEIGHTS.ORG

NextDoor is a neighborhood website for posting items of general interest; classified listings for buying, selling or giving away things; and a database for neighbor-recommended local services. If you are looking for a babysitter, handyman recommendation or to give away that shelf taking up room in your basement, Nextdoor.com provides a way for neighbors to communicate.

Nextdoor’s neighborhood pages, like Hallcrest Heights, are private and everything, including the directory of members, is visible only to fellow members, so marketers can’t use names and addresses. It provides a house-by-house map of neighbors who are members — although members can choose not to have their names attached to their addresses.

To join Hallcrest Heights on Nextdoor 1. Visit [www.nextdoor.com](http://www.nextdoor.com). 2. Enter your residential street address and email address. 3. Select Find your neighborhood. You will automatically be assigned to that neighborhood. 4. **Click Sign up.** 5. **Finally, verify your address.** Having trouble? Contact Marie Ternieden at [mdternieden@yahoo.com](mailto:mdternieden@yahoo.com).

NextDoor is not the official, endorsed site of Hallcrest Heights. Hallcrest Heights HOA does not maintain or monitor Nextdoor.com and is not liable for any damages or claims arising from a resident’s participation in NextDoor.

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## STATUS OF PLAYGROUND PLANS

A year ago, when we surveyed the community by way of a comprehensive questionnaire, one of the proposals sought views on installing a small playground for the increasing numbers of families with small children. Thirty-seven percent of those commenting favored such a proposal with twenty-four percent questioning the specific need. The Board decided to set up a committee to investigate and research the details of any such plan. The committee prepared a detailed report to the Board, specifying such things as liability, County requirements, costs, location, and any possible downside. The Board then selected a Board member to further check on all this and plan a detailed implementation. We decided to locate a 40 by 50 foot section of open space adjoining Dibner Park and suitably prepare it to incrementally install some simple equipment over the next couple of years. The County told us that any equipment must be of commercial grade and the ground underneath must be of specified safety quality in terms of depth, cushioned material, as well as a containing border.

This may begin later this Spring. In approving the approach to this project, the Board of Directors at its April meeting voted unanimously that the Playground (Project) shall be:

1. Managed by the Playground Committee, with oversight by the Board of Directors;
2. Located at a site next to Dibner Park, the maximum size shall be 40 by 50 feet;
3. A modular project that may be incrementally increased within this size if the initial equipment can accommodate other equipment.
4. Surrounded by a border appropriate for the site, based on recommendations of the manufacturer/installer;
5. Constructed within the budget and schedule outlined below:
  - The Association has available funds for the first module depending on actual bids; subsequent additions within this budget year or subsequent budget years shall be approved by the Board.
  - Shall be based on at least two cost appraisals;
  - Shall be installed by a qualified installer.
6. The schedule of construction shall be set by the Playground Committee with input by the Board of Directors and shall be completed by July 1, 2017 unless otherwise extended by the Board based on circumstances beyond the contractor's control.

### FAIRFAX COUNTY'S NEW PROGRAM FOR SOLAR ENERGY

For a limited time, residents and businesses can get discounted prices on solar panels through Solarize Fairfax County. Like a Groupon for solar, this program offers one-time, low prices with companies chosen through competitive bids. Fairfax County is partnering with the Northern Virginia Regional Commission and nonprofit Local Energy Assistance Program to offer this program. Solarize Fairfax County runs from April 18 through June 30. To get started saving on your electric bill:

- Sign up for a free solar assessment. No commitment to install solar is required.
- Attend an information session on April 20 or 26 to learn whether solar is right for you,

understand pricing and financing options and meet the contractors who will install your equipment.

Believe it or not, Northern Virginia gets almost as much sun as Miami. Enter your address in the Northern Virginia Solar Map to get an estimate on how much solar energy you could generate from your roof. To get a more accurate evaluation, sign up for the free assessment from a certified professional.

Some Hallcrest residents have asked about Solar energy for their home, so be sure and check this out.

# Board of Directors

President	M.L. Clark Tyler	7327 Eldorado Street	703-893-3336
Vice President	Claudio Ternieden	7407 Hallcrest Drive	703-501-7871
Alternate	Marie Ternieden	7407 Hallcrest Drive	703-356-1150
Treasurer	Richard Matsko	7400 Hallcrest Drive	703-734-9746
Secretary	John Aranha	7317 Eldorado Street	703-462-9791
Director	Susana Kyrgos	7333 Eldorado Street	571-340-7777
Alternate	Illias Spyrou	7333 Eldorado Street	571-490-1659
Director	Rahul Saddy	7376 Eldorado Street	704-277-2056
Director	Ben East	7404 Eldorado Street	919-522-4472

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See our website at:  
[www.hallcrestheights.org](http://www.hallcrestheights.org)

Layout by Sam Tyler

**The next meeting of the Board will be on**  
**Tuesday, May 9 at 7:30 at 7327 Eldorado Street**

**Hallcrest Heights Associates, Inc.**  
 P.O. Box 621  
 McLean, VA 22101-0621



❖ *Hallcrest Herald* ❖

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