

GREAT NEIGHBORHOODS



Woodside Park: Suburban ideal in Silver Spring

By Katie Wilmeth
Special to The Examiner

Back in 1989, when Woodside Park was being considered for historic district status, the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission had this to say about the Silver Spring-adjacent neighborhood.

"Its basic design and development is probably the purest manifestation of the '20s/'30s suburban ideal to have been built in Montgomery County. [Woodside Park has] the sylvan, park-like character that many subdivisions of the period aspired to but that few actually were able to create. Woodside Park did create this ideal sort of ambiance and has, amazingly, maintained it over the years to a great degree."

Unfortunately, Woodside Park didn't win the historic designation it was seeking, but the Planning Commission's assessment of the neighborhood continues to ring true nearly 20 years later. Nestled between busy Georgia Avenue and Colesville Road and just blocks

from downtown Silver Spring, Woodside Park has managed to stay true to its suburban roots even as development has sprung up around the neighborhood's 600 houses.

"It's less of a dense-looking development than what you'd expect of an urban core," said Robert E. Oshel, chairman of the Woodside Park Civic Association and author of "Homesites of Distinction: The History of Woodside Park." "[We are within] easy walking distance to the Silver Spring Metro station, but at the same time it's an uncrowded neighborhood."

Woodside Park has remained a roomy enclave because its residents have been fiercely protective of the neighborhood's original design. Woodside Park was originally one big farm owned by Crosby Noyes, who was the owner of the old Washington Star newspaper. But when Noyes passed away, his children sold the land to developers. Rather than build cookie-cutter homes on the sprawling land, the developers split it into one-acre lots and sold those, letting residents hire architects to build their own distinct houses. Thus, the neighborhood is an eclectic mix of

homes. You can find an English cottage, Mediterranean villa and traditional Colonial all on the same street and on large lots.

Over the years, many of the lots were cut in half, but neighbors have refused to let them get any smaller. A few years ago, the Civic Association fought a resident who wanted to build five homes on one acre and the Association has also been vocal in the fight against permits for so-called McMansions.

The result has been a neighborhood where close defines friendships but not houses. Their homes — and the park-like yards they sit on — remain quite far apart.

TOP REASONS TO LIVE IN WOODSIDE PARK

» **Big back — and front — yards:** Drive through the streets of Woodside Park and you'll see something that has become more and more rare in today's urban neighborhoods. Land. Rather than tiny strips of front yard, most of the houses in Woodside Park boast enough land for a game of kickball or cartwheels in the grass. And many homeowners, like Robert Oshel, have taken

Woodside Park at a glance

December 2007

» Average sold price for homes sold in zip code 20910: \$509,083

» Average list price for homes in zip code 20910: \$546,722

» Average days on market for homes sold: 80

December 2007

» Average sold price for homes sold in zip code 20910: \$483,385

» Average list price for homes in zip code 20910: \$500,665

» Average days on market for homes sold: 69

advantage of the land by putting in backyard pools. "You know, the lots are big enough," he explained.

» **Eclectic houses:** Oshel designed a walking tour of Woodside Park and it's worth the shoe leather just for a peek at the various houses throughout the neighborhood. Be sure to check out Mansion Drive. Not only does it include a number of unique

houses, but it's also the site of the original mansion that once sat on Noyes' farm. The house that replaced it is a beautiful Mediterranean-style villa that was built on the original foundations of the mansion and an original hitching post still remains outside.

» **Silver Spring:** The revitalization of downtown Silver Spring has made it a hot spot in recent years. An abundance of restaurants, shops and entertainment are just blocks from Woodside Park. In addition, residents can walk to the Silver Spring Metro or jump on the Beltway using the two nearby on-ramps.

» **Active neighborhood association:** Woodside Park hasn't stayed true to its roots by accident. The neighborhood has a very active neighborhood association. Annual picnics and holiday parties are on the calendar, along with an impressive, professionally printed neighborhood newsletter. But it's more than parties and potlucks in Woodside Park. The neighbors are also politically active and work with the local government to protect the "sylvan, park-like character" of their neighborhood.