



Woodlake

Currents Newsletter January 2008

*A publication for members of the
Woodlake Homeowners Association*

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Buildings & Grounds	David White
Neighborhood Watch	Roberta Nielsen
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Board of Directors Report

This past year was challenging for the Woodlake Homeowners Association (WHOA) for various reasons. This newsletter highlights key changes, accomplishments, and frustrations in 2007, as well as plans for 2008. Details on many of the 2007 activities are discussed later in this newsletter. A quick summary of highlights includes:

Transition to New Contractors. CAS, Inc. was hired on July 1 as the WHOA management company following the unexpected closing of Kildaire Management Company. Overall, this transition has been relatively smoothly, with Todd Petherbridge in CAS's Chapel Hill office taking over as the WHOA account manager. As noted in last year's newsletter, we also hired new contractors for landscape maintenance (Clark Landscape Group) and pool operation (Covenant Pool Care). These changes are noteworthy because the work done by these three contractors accounts for roughly 75% of the association's annual operating budget.

Trail Repairs. Substantial repairs were made to the trail system during the fall. The repairs include installation of additional drainage, resurfacing of deteriorated asphalt, surface

coating of the entire trail system, and installation of new gravel. In addition, a new trail section was added to connect Lakeshore Dr to the lake path. We have also contacted the city about installation of handicapped access ramps at several trail locations.

Private Streets. In early 2006, the WHOA initiated survey work that would allow us to transfer maintenance of the private streets in Woodlake (Great Oak, Boxwood, Cedar Hill, and Falls) to the City of Durham. An initial set of "as-built" drawings was submitted to the city for review in late 2006. In 2007, a meeting was held with the city and additional materials have been submitted in response to the city's comments. Hopefully, the city is close to approving the drawings and we will be able to start the process of obtaining affected homeowner signatures soon. Transferring these streets is important to the WHOA because of the financial liability that the association currently has for maintenance and repair of these streets.

Alta Walk Apartments. Wood Partners has finally received all of the permits that are required to begin construction of the Alta Walk seniors apartment complex on the southeast corner of Fayetteville Rd and Woodcroft Parkway. The project will include two three-story

buildings and several cottage style dwellings. Construction on the site is expected to begin in soon, but will not affect the wooded area across from the clubhouse along Woodcroft Parkway. A presentation on the project design and the construction schedule is planned for the annual meeting of the WHOA scheduled for May 13.

Neighborhood Watch. One of the Board's goals has been to strengthen our Neighborhood Watch program. This effort depends upon resident participation. Several meetings were held in 2007 to promote Neighborhood Watch, but additional work is needed. Additional information regarding the program will be distributed to residents later this spring.

2008 Plans. Our plans for 2008 include significant repairs to the association clubhouse and pool areas; additional upgrades to landscaped areas, the lake, and pond; and increased emphasis on Neighborhood Watch. The objective of these activities is to maintain Woodlake as a strong community for residents and to enhance the "curb appeal" and value of the neighborhood.

If you have questions about the above or other items of importance to the WHOA, please contact the Board by sending an e-mail to whoa.board@yahoo.com, contacting CAS (the association's management contractor; their address and phone number are on page 8), or talking directly to a board member.

Website and Listserv Information

The WHOA website (www.woodlakecommunity.org) provides a variety of information for use by Woodlake residents and potential homebuyers. This information includes e-mail links for contacting the Woodlake Board and various committees, a list of announcements that have been sent out via the Woodlake listserv, electronic copies of documents and forms (architectural requests, pool and exercise room access, etc.) and a message board that can be accessed on the bottom of the home page. To subscribe to the Woodlake listserv, go to the bottom of the Announcements page, enter your email address, select "subscribe," and click "submit." Access to the message boards is restricted to homeowners only. Please click the webmaster link and provide the homeowners name(s) and Woodlake street address to obtain a password for accessing the message boards.

If you have any questions or comments on the website, please contact the webmaster via the link at the bottom of the website Home page.

Finance Committee

During 2007, WHOA income was approximately \$224,900 versus operating expenses as outlined below:

- Management Contract \$23,400
- Grounds & Street Maintenance 84,400
- Pool & Clubhouse Expenses 21,300
- Insurance, Legal, Utilities, etc. 28,700

This summary does not include the expenses of \$56,200 for trail repairs that were not approved for payment until 2008. The remaining \$10,900 of revenue is being added to our general reserves to cover future private road conversion expenses and facility improvements.

The board has approved a budget for 2008 that does not require an increase in dues. This was accomplished primarily by controlling contractor expenses combined with the hope that the private streets will be transferred to the city in 2008.

During 2007, the Board and Finance Committee commissioned a "reserves study" to assess financial reserves needed to meet non-routine operating and maintenance expenses (e.g., clubhouse, pool, and trail repairs, private street maintenance) over the next 12 years. The results of this study were used during development of the 2008 budget.

Architectural Review Committee

As Spring approaches, so do thoughts of home improvements. Whatever project you have in mind, remember that ARC approval is usually needed before you can begin any external home modification, new construction, repainting, or fencing. Exceptions to this general rule are repairing home damage to return a home to its original condition and/or repainting a home the existing colors. The approval process is initiated by submitting a completed *Homeowner's Request for Architectural Approval* form, which can be downloaded from the WHOA website (www.woodlakecommunity.org) or found in the white box outside the front door of the

Clubhouse. The committee normally meets on the first and third Tuesdays of each month. Completed request forms must be submitted to the white box outside the front door of the clubhouse no later than the Friday before each meeting. The ARC forms are designed to expedite approval by using a checklist format. *The main reason for a delay in approval is the failure to submit one or more of the required items, so please read the list carefully.* If you have any questions, contact the committee at whoa.arch@yahoo.com.

Buildings and Grounds

The Buildings & Grounds Committee oversees operation and maintenance of the trails, lake, clubhouse, swimming pool, and all other WHOA property. In this role, the committee's strives to enhance both the quality of life and the value of property within the community. Some of the work is done by volunteers, but most of it is performed by contractors. The two largest contracts are for year-round landscape maintenance and for operation of the pool during the summer. If you would like to become a member of the committee or have questions about B&G activities, e-mail whoa.grounds@yahoo.com.

Landscaping: The B&G Committee identified a number of landscape improvement projects in early 2007. Several of these projects – including new plantings at the Barbee Rd entrance and along Woodcroft Parkway (near Lake Village townhomes), and installation of retaining walls along the lakeshore near the playground and near the southeast corner of the pond – were completed during the spring and early summer. However, due to the drought, planned improvements along the lakeshore and to the annual beds scattered throughout the neighborhood were postponed. Some of this work was done late in the year after it became possible to fill a water trailer with lake water. Hopefully, further landscape improvements will be possible in 2008, but may be affected by water availability.

Lake and Pond: Also of significance in 2007 was a significant fish kill in the pond that occurred in May. It is believed that this event resulted from a rapid algae bloom and die off that caused dissolved oxygen levels to drop below acceptable levels. The algae bloom is believed to have resulted from a combination of

limited spring rainfall, spring lawn fertilization, and several days of unseasonably high temperatures. To reduce the risk of similar events in the future, homeowners are asked to limit spring lawn fertilization (see article on fertilization later in the newsletter). In addition, the HOA is planning to install aeration systems in the pond and at the north end of the lake in 2008 to increase dissolved oxygen levels in the two areas and to reduce odors associated with stagnate water caused by limited rainfall.

Canada Geese: As discussed in last year's newsletter, the number of Canada geese residing at Woodlake continues to be an issue. We recognize that the geese and ducks are part of what makes Woodlake unique, but that the geese especially contribute to a number of environmental and aesthetic concerns. These include the large quantity of droppings on the trails, damage to grassed areas, and algae growth in the lake due to increased nutrient levels. The string fence that was installed on the west side of the lake appears to have been successful in reducing the number of geese coming ashore in that area, and installation of a vegetative border along the lake edge is still planned (planting in 2007 was postponed due to the drought). The reduced number of people feeding bread to the geese and ducks has also been helpful in reducing the number of geese residing in Woodlake. Your cooperation in not feeding the geese – and asking others to do likewise – is much appreciated.

Clubhouse Repairs: As noted in the Board of Directors section, significant repairs are being made to the clubhouse and pool areas in early 2008. Most of this work is required because of wood rot to window frames and fascia boards. The work will also include replacement of warped countertops in the pool house bathrooms and a complete repainting of the clubhouse and pool area exteriors.

Pool: Operation of the pool in 2007 went well. The new pool contractor, Covenant Pool Care, agreed to keep the pool open for two weeks longer in the fall at no additional cost, which worked out well in light of the hot weather that continued into late September. The big question for 2008 is how water use restrictions will affect our ability to fill the pool this spring. We will be discussing this issue with Covenant and monitoring local water restrictions over the next couple of months.

Neighborhood Watch

Neighborhood Watch is one of the most effective and least costly ways to reduce crime in residential areas. It forges bonds among residents, helps reduce burglaries and robberies, and improves relations between police and the communities they serve. Neighborhood Watch is not a substitute for the police department – if you observe a crime or suspicious activity, your first step should be to contact the police at 911. However, if your only action is to contact the police, you are overlooking crime prevention and safety issues that are important to your immediate neighbors and to the neighborhood as a whole. To address the broader issues, a group of residents is working to re-energize Woodlake's Neighborhood Watch program, but they need YOUR help.

Do I need to be concerned? Although Woodlake is a great neighborhood and generally very safe, Neighborhood Watch has reviewed calls made by residents to Durham police in 2007 and found 34 reports of actual or attempted house or car break-ins, 13 reports of vandalism, and 2 drug-related reports. Review of these reports indicates that they frequently occurred in clusters (e.g., there were 8 incidents during the two-week period spanning Thanksgiving and another 8 incidents during the last week on May and the first week in June), suggesting repeat attacks by a single person or group. The data also shows an increase in the number of incidents over the course of the year, with the number of reported incidents during the last three months of the year being almost double the rate during the first three months.

Unfortunately, there is not routine feedback from the Durham police to the WHOA when incidents occur. In addition, although the WHOA has asked residents to send an e-mail to the Board regarding any incidents reported to police, most residents have not done so. As a result, the WHOA has not been aware of most of incidents that have occurred.

What can Woodlake do to improve our Neighborhood Watch program? In response to this situation, the WHOA recently hosted a meeting of residents to discuss how to best re-invigorate our Neighborhood Watch program. During that meeting, it was agreed that:

- More communication is needed with residents regarding crime and safety concerns in Woodlake and surrounding areas,
- Residents need to be better informed about how they can contribute to crime reduction, and
- An organizational structure is needed to encourage neighbors to work together at the street and cul-de-sac level.

To address this last bullet, the group concluded that because of Woodlake's size (600 individual residences), we needed to subdivide the neighborhood into approximately 8 areas, and that each area should be divided into "blocks" consisting of 8-10 houses or town homes. For this approach to work, we need neighborhood volunteers to serve as "block captains" and "area coordinators."

What do "block captains" and "area coordinators" do? A block captain performs two basic roles. One is to maintain a phone/e-mail tree that can be used to contact a resident if an incident occurs while he or she is away from home (at work, on vacation, etc.). The second is to assure that any incidents, suspicious activity, or other concerns are reported to residents on their block and to other block captains. The area coordinators role is to stay in touch with the block captains in their area and with other area coordinators on an as-needed basis. If you are interested in assisting the Neighborhood Watch program as a block captain, please e-mail your name, address, and phone number to whoa.nwatch@yahoo.com.

What can residents do NOW? We hope to have block captains throughout the neighborhood by this spring. However, there are a variety of things that you can do to increase safety in your own house in the meantime. Here are a few suggestions discussed at the recent Neighborhood Watch meeting:

- **Know your neighbors!** Exchange phone numbers, email addresses, and schedules. You can make a big impact on crime by noting anything out of place or suspicious in the neighborhood and calling the police to investigate. If your neighbors are on vacation, but there is a strange car in their drive way - call the police!

- **Improve security around your house:** Add motion sensor flood lights. Put a lock on the door to the crawl space under your house. Install and use an alarm service. Keep shrubs near your house trimmed. Consider installing a home alarm system.
- **Don't let criminals know when you aren't around.** Pickup your newspaper in the morning, don't leave trash and recycling bins on the curb. Leave lights on timers when you are away. If a criminal thinks you are at home, he or she will likely move along.
- **Don't tempt criminals.** Don't leave wallets, purses, GPSs, iPods, or other valuables in your car unattended. Don't leave door or windows unlocked - if you have a garage, dead bolt the door from the garage into your house.
- **Say "No" to solicitors.** Woodlake has a "no soliciting" policy. If a stranger comes to your door, it is not rude to advise them of our "no soliciting" policy and tell them to leave the neighborhood. While some solicitors may be genuine, others may be trying to scope out the neighborhood. Actual incidents in Woodlake include the "repair guy" who offered to clean gutters or do minor repairs, but was mainly interested in checking out what was in the garage; and the woman who had "car trouble" and asked to borrow a phone so she could come in to see what was in the house.

Crime can occur anywhere, but only when both a criminal and an opportunity are present. Know your neighbors and report anything suspicious to the police. By taking a few simple precautions, we can keep each other – and Woodlake – safe!

Recreational Information

Call for Volunteers: The WHOA is interested in promoting recreational activities in the neighborhood, such as a 4th of July part and a Fall Festival, but doing so depends on the availability of volunteers to coordinate these activities. If you are interested in helping with such activities, please send an e-mail to whoa.recreation@yahoo.com.

Woodlake Easter Egg Hunt is scheduled for Saturday morning, March 22 at the clubhouse.

If you would like to help with planning or egg collection, please contact Moria Brass at moriab@hotmail.com.

Woodlake Seniors Group (WSG) meets at the club house on the third Tuesday of each month at 9:00 AM for breakfast. All seniors (55+) living in Woodlake are welcome. During the meetings, seniors discuss items of common interest. Please send an e-mail to whoa.seniors@yahoo.com if you are interested. WSG is a lot of FUN.

Softball: If you are interested in playing co-ed softball and can commit to regularly participating in games, contact Stacy Tantum at 484-7946 or slt@ee.duke.edu. All experience and skill levels are welcome, but you must be at least 18 years old. The Parkwood League plays games on Sunday afternoon during the summer and fall at the field next to the Parkwood library.

Exercise Room: If you want to use the exercise room at the clubhouse, please complete the exercise room use agreement (available from the WHOA website or by contacting CAS) and send it to CAS by mail or fax (403-1499).

Please remember that if no one is in the room when you leave, TURN THE LIGHTS OUT and be sure the door is closed!

Welcoming Committee

The Woodlake Welcoming Committee had a great year of greeting newcomers to the Woodlake community. Besides making a personal visit to each newcomer, they hosted a successful reception in the clubhouse as an opportunity for newcomers to get to know one another.

The welcome visit comes with a basket of goodies and packet of useful information. The packet not only has information about Woodlake, the local area, and Durham, it also includes coupons to local shops, a handy Durham street map, and other brochures. In addition, the visit offers a chance for new residents to ask questions about Woodlake or the area. If you have recently moved to Woodlake, but have not been visited, contact Betty Turnbull at whoa.welcome@yahoo.com.

The Welcoming Committee is also an opportunity for existing residents to get to know new neighbors. If you would like to be a part of this exciting committee, contact Betty either by

phone or email (above). New committee members are always welcome.

General Interest Information

Call for Volunteers

The WHOA Board of Directors and various committees are staffed by volunteers who care about our community. If you have time to get involved and interest in a specific area, please contact the Board or committee via the e-mail link on the website or via CAS.

Trail Use by Bicycles

The WHOA handbook restricts bicycles from using the Woodlake trails. The primary reason for this rule is for the safety of pedestrians that use the trails. However, in response to resident concerns about the safety of bicyclers on some of Woodlake's streets (e.g., Lakeshore Drive), the Board reviewed the current rule and has decided to allow bikes on the trails during a trial period if the bicycler is going to the pool, to a neighbor, or other areas (e.g., to the American Tobacco Trail), but not to allow use of the trails as an exercise circuit for riding laps. As with the original rule, the primary reason for allowing limited use of the trails by bicycles is safety. In all cases, bicycles are to yield to walkers and runners, should announce (vocally or with a bell) that they are approaching a pedestrian from behind, and are to slow down when approach pedestrians or coming around a curve with limited visibility. The purpose of allowing bicycles on the trails during a trial period is to determine if bikes can safely use the trails without jeopardizing pedestrian safety. If problems arise, this trial period may be terminated. However, the Board's hope is that all residents – bikers and walkers – can use the trails safely. If you see a bicycler riding laps or traveling at an unsafe speed, please inform them of the rules and notify the Board at whoa.board@yahoo.com.

Pet Etiquette

Taking care of your pet is your responsibility – 24 hours a day. Three key rules of etiquette apply when you pet is not in your own yard:

- Keep your pet on a leash when you are taking them for a walk,
- Do not let your pet pee or poop in another resident's yard, and

- Pick up after your pet has done his/her business.

There are pet waste bag dispensers at several locations along the trails. Please use these bags or bring one from home.

In addition to these Woodlake policies, there are also City of Durham animal control ordinances. If someone is violating these policies, please contact animal control at 560-0630 or CAS at 403-1400.

Clubhouse Rental

The Woodlake clubhouse is available for party and meeting rentals. For additional information and reservations, contact Cara Hudson at 544-5253

Lake Water Quality and Lawn Fertilization

Reduced rainfall and hot weather made 2007 a tough year for Woodlake's lake and pond. This past spring, there was a significant fish kill in the pond and there has been a persistent problem with algae growth in the lake. A significant contributor to both of these situations is the runoff of nitrogen and phosphorus in lawn fertilizers. These nutrients promote the growth of algae, which during hot weather will die and deplete lake oxygen levels. Because all storm water runoff in Woodlake drains into the lake, every lawn in our neighborhood contributes to the buildup of nitrogen and phosphorus in the lake and pond. As a result, it is important for all homeowners to avoid using excessive lawn fertilizer. Two things to remember:

- As a general rule, most of the soils in our area naturally have ample phosphorus. Use a low phosphorus fertilizer on your lawn unless you are doing major lawn renovation (best done in the fall).
- Fescue lawns (the primary grass type in Woodlake) benefit from fall fertilization and need only a small amount of fertilization in the spring (equal to ½ lb of nitrogen per 1000 square feet). Applying more than this amount simply promotes rapid growth (and lots of mowing). The best time to fertilize is in the fall (once in September when temperatures start to let up and again in November to encourage root growth over the winter).

Please keep these two facts in mind when you (or a contractor) apply fertilizer to your lawn.

Following them will help the HOA reduce algae growth in the lake and pond.

Water Use

Do you know how many gallons of water you use of a typical day? If not, check your water bill. The units of use are 100 cubic feet. Convert this to gallons by multiplying by 750 and divide by the number of days in the billing period. The target value suggested by some local governments is 35 gallons per day per person.

Litter

Please don't drop bags, bottles, and other litter when you are walking or driving in our neighborhood or elsewhere. Be respectful of other residents and of Mother Nature.

Association Handbook

The WHOA Handbook (available on the website or from CAS) contains various guidelines and policies that are intended to enhance the quality of life in our neighborhood. The intent of the handbook is to not create "a bunch of silly rules," but rather to provide a framework for cooperation and respect among residents. The WHOA conducts periodic property maintenance inspections. Some violations are difficult to detect from the street (e.g., debris in a backyard or a car parked in the street for extended periods). As a result, residents who are aware of problems can contact CAS to file a complaint. Depending on the nature and severity of the problem, CAS will either send a letter to the violator, contact the police (if the problem is a violation of a city ordinance or regulation), or discuss the issue with the WHOA Board. If the problem persists, the Board has the authority to issue fines and suspend privileges of homeowners who fail to comply with association rules. This option is generally used as a last resort but is needed when residents will not otherwise cooperate.

The following summarizes some of the rules that are in the WHOA Handbook.

1. Maintenance of Property: The WHOA regularly conducts drive-through inspections to assure that houses and yards are being maintained. These inspections include structural repairs and exterior painting, yard maintenance, and debris removal. These inspections are also conducted to assure that

new painting, fences, or other property changes have been approved by ARC.

2. Noise: Loud or persistent noise is offensive to your neighbors. This can include barking dogs and loud music (especially after dark). In some cases, the quickest way to deal with this situation is to call your neighbor and let them know that the problem is going on. If the problem persists, the police should be contacted and CAS should be notified. If the problem is on-going and complaints are received from multiple residents, the WHOA will take appropriate action against the offender.

3. Waste and Recycling Containers: Garbage, yard waste, and recycling containers that are picked up by the city should not be placed at the street until the evening before pickup and should be removed from the curb by the evening after pick-up. When not at the curb, containers should be stored in an unobtrusive location (e.g., in the garage or a screened area in the side yard).

4. Signs on Association Property: Temporary signs such as "Home for Sale", "Yard Sale", "Open House", and other related advertisements cannot be placed on association property for more than 24 hours during a one-week period. Association property includes all the entranceways, property around the clubhouse, and areas adjacent to the lake and trails. Any signs remaining on association property for longer than this duration will be removed.

5. Landscaping: The handbook gives homeowners significant discretion regarding landscaping as long as it is maintained and does not involve a structure or block the view of their neighbors. However, ARC can review any landscaping situation if requested by two or more homeowners and can require that the situation be corrected to a condition that is harmonious with the overall Woodlake landscape.

6. Solicitors: There are no soliciting signs posted at the entrances to Woodlake. If a solicitor knocks on your door, you can tell them that these signs are posted, that they are trespassing, and ask them to leave the neighborhood. This policy is not intended to stop the selling of Girl Scout cookies, but rather to keep aggressive pan handlers and scam artists out of our neighborhood.

**Woodlake Homeowners Association
c/o CAS, Inc.
5915 Farrington Road, Suite 104
Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27517-9900**



MAY 13 – HOLD THIS DATE: The Woodlake Homeowners Association annual meeting is tentatively scheduled for 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, May 13. Please reserve this date on your calendar. More information on the meeting will be mailed in the spring.

Want to know what is going on in Woodlake? Community news is disseminated through a community list serv. Sign up to receive these e-mails on Announcements page of the WHOA website www.woodlakecommunity.org.

Contact Information for CAS

CAS Inc. assists with and oversees day-to-day operation and management for the Woodlake Homeowners Association. Our Account Manager is Todd Petherbridge. To contact Todd, call 919-403-1400, send a fax to 919-403-1499, or e-mail todd@casnc.com. Normal office hours are 9-4 on Monday through Friday. For after hours emergencies, call 877-420-9320