



## Real Estate

In Montgomery's booming Wheaton Hills, a sense of community is also growing

---

by Audrey Hoffer June 29

Wheaton Hills is a 360-acre residential enclave of 1,300 houses in the greater Silver Spring area, adjacent to the Glenmont Forest and Connecticut Avenue Estates communities. It sits in the triangle formed by the convergence of Georgia Avenue and Veirs Mill Road, a few blocks from Wheaton's commercial district.

The neighborhood boasts mature trees, a thriving rabbit population that delights children, deer and the occasional bald eagle. Many of the gently rolling streets are one-way.

Most houses are Colonials, Cape Cods and ramblers. There's also a small pocket of Charles Goodman contemporaries and townhouses, said Brian Sobotka, a 10-year resident who lives there with his wife, Brittany, and their children, Jackson, 4, and Brock, almost 2. Sobotka is a real estate agent with Long & Foster.

"We're experiencing a booming real estate market in the neighborhood," he said. "Many buyers are escalating above asking price and waiving common contingencies like home inspections and appraisals."

"People are bumping out the [back of their houses] because they want to live here for a long time. The neighborhood is on the come-up. Our little secret about living here is kind of out now," he added.

Isabel, 8, and her sister Gabrielle, 4, like the street they live on with their parents, Sean Corbett and Earl Fenwick.

"We play outside, basketball and sometimes soccer. One of our friends has a trampoline in the back yard. We do flips and jumps," said Isabel.

**Diverse community:** Corbett and Fenwick moved from the District to Wheaton Hills 10 years ago.

"When we were deciding to have kids, we wanted decent schools, good prices, services like a library, parks and a functioning mall, and diversity," said Corbett, one of the founders and president of the Wheaton Hills Civic Association.

"Here we have it all. Our neighbors are from the Middle East, Barbados and Latin America. We have economic and professional diversity — mechanics, teachers, government workers, entrepreneurs, professionals and landscape gardeners," he said.

"Our kids get to see real life," said Sobotka. "Younger families are moving in. At a recent open house I held, several prospective buyers were pregnant women and parents holding babies."

"We've come a long way since the time people associated Wheaton with crime and a residential wasteland," said Corbett. Residents organize events with neighboring communities as well as among themselves, said Corbett.

"Our neighborhood is the kind of place where impromptu gatherings take shape," said Corbett.

"Someone has orange [traffic] cones and puts them on the street. Kids gather. A parent will bring out beers and wine and you have a party. People you don't know walk by and you say 'come join us' and hand them a drink," said Sobotka.

**Having their say:** Residents started a neighborhood civic association in 2014 because they felt no one was advocating for them, said Corbett.

"The county's attention and funding were focused entirely on the downtown commercial district. Several of us formed the Wheaton Hills Civic Association to give the neighborhood a voice," said Corbett.

The association asked the county for sidewalks, and three miles of additional sidewalks are under construction.

"We've created a more walkable neighborhood for kids going to school and residents strolling in the evening," he said.

Stormwater runoff leads to summertime flooding because storm drains can't hold the water. The association recently partnered with the University of Maryland's Environmental Finance Center to study the problem and recommend solutions.

"Even with our diversity, our association, like many, skews older and whiter than neighborhood demographics," said Corbett.

"We're trying to figure out how to reach the 40 percent of our population for whom English is a second language. We struggle to find the resources to be as inclusive as we want to be. We didn't move here to just say we love diversity. We want to embrace that diversity."

**Living there:** Wheaton-Claridge Local Park covers more than 20 acres of woods and a stream. The county paid for a \$2 million upgrade. It reopened in April with a new playground, trails, basketball court and refurbished park activity building.

7/2/2018

In Montgomery's booming Wheaton Hills, a sense of community is also growing - The Washington Post

Wheaton Regional Park, 536 acres on the other side of Georgia Avenue, offers horse stables, ballfields, play areas and subparks such as Brookside Gardens and Brookside Nature Center.

Downtown Wheaton is home to many ethnic family-run restaurants. The Westfield Wheaton shopping mall has Giant, Target and Costco stores, movies, restaurants, and more retail outlets.

Wheaton Hills is in Montgomery County and is roughly bounded by Henderson Avenue on the north, Georgia Avenue on the east, University Boulevard on the south and southeast, Veirs Mills Road on the west and southwest, and Claridge Road on the northwest.

According to Sobotka, nine properties are for sale, ranging from a two-bedroom, two-bathroom Cape Cod for \$296,000 to a four-bedroom, three-bathroom Colonial for \$625,000.

Five properties are under contract, ranging from a three-bedroom, two-bathroom Colonial for \$394,900 to a four-bedroom, two-bathroom Colonial for \$499,000.

In the past year, 46 homes sold, ranging from a three-bedroom, two-bathroom rambler for \$295,000 to a four-bedroom, four-bathroom rambler for \$490,000.

**Schools:** Highland Elementary, Newport Mill Middle, Einstein High.

**Transit:** The Wheaton Metro station on the Red Line is a 15-minute walk away, with parking available. Metro and county buses serve the station and the neighborhood.

**Crime:** According to the LexisNexis Community Crime Map, there were five thefts, three motor vehicle thefts, two robberies and burglaries, one assault, and one arson in the past year.

 **9 Comments**

**The Washington Post**

**The story must be told.**

Your subscription supports journalism that matters.

**Try 1 month for \$1**

7/2/2018

In Montgomery's booming Wheaton Hills, a sense of community is also growing - The Washington Post