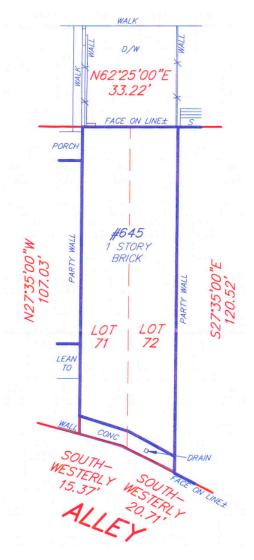
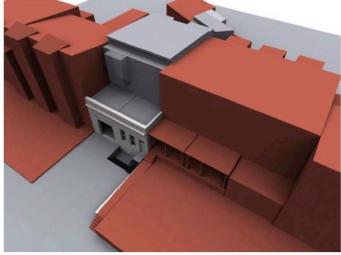


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The Washington Post

Revitalized Stanton Park neighborhood feels like microcosm of D.C.

By Amy Reinink, June 10, 2011

Bill Crews was looking for a neighborhood that represented all the best parts of Washington when he moved here from Iowa 13 years ago.

He found it in Stanton Park, a 50-block area of Capitol Hill within walking distance of the Capitol, Union Station and the Library of Congress.

"To me, it's the ideal place to live in the District," said Crews, 58, a strategic planner for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Risk Management Agency and an advisory neighborhood commissioner for part of Stanton Park. "Some people who live in this area hardly ever see the city's monumental core. We get to experience it daily."

Crews is one of many residents to say that Stanton Park's historic brick rowhouses, cherry-tree-lined streets and proximity to Washington's most iconic buildings make it feel like a microcosm of the city.

At the same time, "we felt like we didn't have to trade off the kind of small-town, friendly neighborhood we had in Iowa," said Crews, who moved to the neighborhood with his now-husband, Steve Kehoe, in 1998. "In the Midwest, neighbor is a verb. In Stanton Park, we 'neighbor.'"

Stanton Park wasn't so quaint and neighborly in the 1980s, when longtime residents say crime was plentiful and neighborhood issues included vacant, dilapidated houses.

When advisory neighborhood commissioner Tom Hamilton, 67, who is retired from the IT industry, moved to the neighborhood with his wife, Nadine, in the 1980s, "you took your life in your hands if you went to H Street," he said.

"H Street has become a dining and entertainment attraction, and that change has just been a miracle," Hamilton said.

Monte Edwards, 70, a retired lawyer and engineer who moved to Stanton Park in 1984, said his house was broken into three times in the first five years he lived there.

"It was not the safe, comfortable place it is now," he said.

Back then, the Stanton Park Neighborhood Association aimed to curb crime and keep residents connected.

The association technically still exists, but went inactive after the advisory neighborhood commissions covering the neighborhood became more involved and police beefed up local patrols, said Hamilton, who held leadership positions in the association when it was active.

Former Stanton Park Neighborhood Association president Dee Atwell, a business development specialist in her early 60s, said informal events such as picnics and block parties now serve as gathering points for residents. Stanton Park, for which the neighborhood is named, has a playground and a dog park, and both are meeting places.

"There's a children's playground there that's been nicely redone, and I swear there are times when there are hundreds of kids playing there," Hamilton said.

At well said the response to a recent mass e-mail looking for volunteers to help plant trees in the neighborhood illustrates the sense of community activism in Stanton Park.

"They got so many volunteers, they literally had to turn people away," Atwell said. "This is more of a neighborhood than anyplace I've ever lived."

Still, some residents said the neighborhood isn't as cohesive as it once was.

"When I first moved here, you could walk down the block and visit with your neighbors, because everyone sat out on their front porches," Hamilton said. "That's changing. The porch-sitters tended to be older residents. As more young families move in, we see more people in their back yard or in their air-conditioned house than on their porch."

But the influx of young families over the past several years has also infused the neighborhood with "a youthful vibrancy that wasn't here 20 years ago," Edwards said.

Stanton Park has also become increasingly expensive as houses are revitalized and crime rates drop.

The neighborhood's homes — many of which are Wardman-style brick rowhouses built in the late 1800s and early 1900s — fetch up to \$2.625 million, the highest selling price in the past year, said Divi Harris of Citylights Realty Group.

"Part of the reason I wound up over here is that it was less expensive than Southeast [Capitol Hill] at the time," said Atwell, who moved to Stanton Park from that area in 1987. "That's no longer the case."

Other downsides include parking, which Crews said is "a perennial issue for people who don't have off-street spaces," especially close to Union Station.

Residents said the parking problem is easy to overcome, because it's easy to walk or take Metro anywhere they need to go.

"My car often goes three weeks without being started, much less moved," Atwell said. "By the time you get in your car, drive where you need to go, then find another place, you can easily hop on public transportation or walk."

And in Stanton Park, she said, walking several blocks is a joy rather than a hassle.

"People take good care of their houses and yards, so it's visually appealing," Atwell said. "You see dogs and kids and people outside. My walk to Union Station is eight blocks, and it's lovely."

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