

About Fort Sumner Homes

Fort Sumner is a Bethesda Neighborhood Full of Traditions

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It's several weeks away, but the residents of Bethesda's Fort Sumner are gearing up for a long-standing tradition that best defines the character of the neighborhood: the Christmas luminarias.

Every December, the Fort Sumner Citizens Association helps residents adorn porches and walkways with hundreds of small lanterns — really just white paper bags weighted with sand and lighted by candles within. The neighborhood glows. Residents stroll through the quiet, tree-lined streets, kids “oohing” and “ahhing” at the beauty. Residents of other communities nearby come to the neighborhood to enjoy the show.

Residents say the tradition highlights Fort Sumner's sense of community, its active neighborhood association and its place within the greater Bethesda community.

“It's a really nice tradition that totally embodies the neighborhood for me,” said Rep. Ariana B. Kelly (D-District 16), who has lived in Fort Sumner since early 2010. “It's been going on for decades, and everyone participates. I'm Jewish, but I look forward to the luminaria all year.”

The Fort Sumner neighborhood, which consists of 111 houses off Sangamore Road, takes its name from the Civil War fort of the same name. The fort was razed in 1956 to make way for homes to be built, according to a history of the neighborhood compiled by the Fort Sumner Citizens Association.

Fifteen different builders constructed homes in Fort Sumner, giving the neighborhood's housing stock an eclectic character, said Tammy Gruner Durbin, 49, an agent with Long & Foster who has lived in Fort Sumner for 13 years.

Many of the neighborhood's original ramblers and split-levels remain, though most have been renovated or added to. Durbin said tear-downs are rare in Fort Sumner, in contrast to many other neighborhoods in the Bethesda area.

Those houses don't come cheap. The average sale price in the neighborhood over the past year was more than \$1 million, according to Durbin.

Durbin said Fort Sumner often serves as a “move-up” neighborhood for families who have outgrown smaller houses elsewhere in Bethesda and are looking for larger properties and houses with bigger rooms — a category that includes her own family.

“A lot of who people move here have fallen in love with the community but want a little bit of a bigger footprint,” Durbin said.

ZIP CODE: 20816

BOUNDARIES: Roughly, Westpath Way to the north and west, Sangamore Road to the east, and Overlea Road, but the neighborhood also includes a short stretch of Wapakoneta Road and some houses on the other side of Overlea and Sangamore roads.

SCHOOLS: Wood Acres Elementary, Thomas W. Pyle Middle, Walt Whitman High.

HOME SALES: Tammy Gruner Durbin of Long & Foster is the top selling agent in Fort Sumner.

WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE: Capital Crescent Trail, the Shops at Sumner Place.

WITHIN 10 MINUTES BY CAR: Downtown Bethesda.

TRANSIT: Ride-On provides bus service to the Friendship Heights Metro station (Red Line).

