

Real Estate

Martin's Additions offers village life in an urban area

Correction: *A previous version of the story listed incorrect school information. Students attend Silver Creek Middle School, not Westland Middle School. A previous version of the map that accompanies the story had incorrect boundaries for Martin's Additions. The western boundary is Brookville Road, not Connecticut Avenue.*

By Diane Bernard

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Deeply rooted in its past with a mix of turn-of-the-century farmhouses, 1930s bungalows and Colonials, with some contemporary teardowns in between, the small village of Martin's Additions in Chevy Chase, Md., still gives a sense of what has gone before.

Foliage of mature trees hundreds of years old, including live oaks and beeches, melds with newer plantings supervised by the town's arborist, who encourages residents not to cut down the venerable trees. Its approximately 1,000 residents span generations, with retirees living alongside middle-aged professionals with teenagers and young parents with toddlers.

"In a way, it's the area that time forgot," said Arthur Alexander, 83, who has lived in the neighborhood for 30 years.

Just a half mile north of Chevy Chase Circle and the District line, Martin's Additions offers a sense of rural living in a close-in suburb. Many of the streets don't have sidewalks, and some residents oppose putting them in because "it would destroy the country character," said Alexander, who serves as the town's treasurer.

“Others say we need to be realistic and admit that this is, indeed, a suburb, and we ought to add suburban sidewalks,” he adds.

But that feeling of country life is what draws many of the residents to the area. Kristi Tampio, who moved to the neighborhood a little more than three years ago, says she and her husband were attracted to the diverse styles of homes, which gives “the neighborhood plenty of character.”

She was also drawn to the mix of generations who live there. “We have a lot of teenagers who do babysitting and yard work, which is a huge help,” she said.

Martin’s Additions is known for its walkability. A small village shopping area anchored by Brookville Market, a pharmacy, the Olympia Cafe coffee shop, a dry cleaners and a barbershop is a 10-minute walk away for most residents.

“I don’t have to use a car to pick up milk, eggs or even a bottle of wine,” said Monty Boland, who has lived in the neighborhood for about three years.

Even the town’s government has a small-town feel. Martin’s Additions was incorporated as its own municipality in 1985 because residents wanted more control over local services and regulations, according to Alexander. Instead of using Montgomery County services, a five-person town council oversees care of the roads, trees, trash pickup and other municipal duties.

Tampio says the village is very responsive. In other areas of Montgomery, residents call 3-1-1 and hope to find someone who can help, she said.

“Here, if you have a problem with anything from recycling to a fallen tree, you call the village manager on his phone, you know his name,” she said. “It feels like you have your own concierge.”

While the municipality was established in the 1980s, the history of Martin's Additions goes back hundreds of years. The village was originally part of farmland cultivated in the late 1600s.

In 1780, Zachariah MacCubbin bought the farm and christened it No Gain Plantation after a 1786 land survey showed his property was smaller than he originally thought, according to William LeoGrande, a Martin's Addition resident and vice provost at American University. LeoGrande, who has lived in the village since 1985, wrote a short history of the land for the Chevy Chase Historical Society newsletter in 1999.

MacCubbin built his family home in what is now Martin's Additions in 1780, and the house was continuously occupied for over 200 years until it was torn down two years ago, according to Alexander.

By 1790, the plantation included 14 slaves, both adults and children. A log cabin built on the land in 1760 still stands on Thornapple Street and is rumored to be a former slave quarters, but its origins haven't officially been verified, according to LeoGrande.

By 1797, 11 creditors, including Alexander Hamilton, had sued MacCubbin for unpaid debts. He sold the farm in the early 1800s. It remained a farm with various owners until 1896, when Harry M. Martin began buying land from the Chevy Chase Land Co. and other landowners in the area. He called his holding "Martin's Additions to Chevy Chase." The trolley-commuter neighborhood became a special taxing district in 1916, which allowed it to form a citizens' committee to manage the area.

Today, Martin's Additions still attracts commuters who work downtown. Tampio's husband, Jesse, takes the Ride On or Metrobus to the Friendship Heights Metro station, which is a little less than two miles away, to commute to his job in Foggy Bottom.

Over the years, Martin's Additions has expanded its community activities, said Tampio, who serves as chair of the town's community engagement committee. She said a highlight of the calendar is the annual Independence Day celebration, which this year featured a carnival with rides, a bounce house, a waterslide and a hot dog truck.

"It's quite fun to watch some of our grown-ups in the neighborhood going down the waterslide," Tampio said.

Community events are funded by village taxes, she added. Even paying for these events, Martin's Additions has one of the lowest property tax rates among all municipalities in Montgomery.

The town also sponsors events at a local French restaurant, La Ferme, a onetime favorite of Nancy and Ronald Reagan.

"My wife and I joke it's like our country club," said Boland, a real estate agent at Wilson Boland Long and Foster.

Living there: Martin's Additions has only single-family houses. Two homes are on the market, according to Gretchen Koitz, a real estate agent with Compass. One is a five-bedroom, five-bathroom house priced at \$1.7 million. The second is a five-bedroom, six-bathroom house for \$1.8 million.

Over the past year, there were two houses sold. One was a four-bedroom, two-bathroom split-level that sold for \$778,000. The other was a six-bedroom, six-bathroom house that sold for \$1.8 million.

Schools: Chevy Chase Elementary, Westland Middle, Bethesda-Chevy Chase High.

Transit: The Friendship Heights Metro station is approximately two miles from the southern end of Martin's Additions. Ride On and Metrobus routes serve the neighborhood. Connecticut and Western avenues are the

closest major thoroughfares.

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