



PHOTOS BY KEN MOORE/THE CONNECTION
Joyce Harris, of McLean Trees Foundation: "Trees rely on us." See <http://www.mcleantreesfoundation.org/>

Wallace Sansone, of Franklin Park, Margaret Malone, of Turkey Run Road, and Neil Ende, of Chesterbrook Woods, were able to voice frustration over diminishing tree canopy in McLean due to infill development.

Saving Trees While Building Houses

McLean's Third Annual Tree Forum engages developers and homeowners on the importance of trees.

BY KEN MOORE
THE CONNECTION

Developers at the third annual McLean Tree Forum surprised some audience members with their appreciation for trees.

Mark Stahl says his new property in Vienna is the home of the second oldest tree in Vienna. His neighbor owns a home with the oldest tree.

Stahl, of Stahl Homes, said his neighbor was nervous when he bought the property on which he was going to build his new house. There was no question he was going to ensure the health of both trees.

Shahl shifted the location of his tree back about 20 feet to ensure the safety of the two trees Vienna home-steads.

"I have over a half acre to work with, I had wiggle room," said Stahl. "We're going to take every precaution that we can."

Scott Murray, president of Focal Point Homes, told an anecdote about how insistent he was when trying to convince one of his customers to preserve a tree Murray thought was a beautiful part of the property.

Murray has built 65 homes in McLean. His customer always wanted to have a big backyard for his children.

"We're not going to take that tree down," said Murray, who advocated to move the home back on the premise.

It was actually the arborist Murray hired, who told him that the tree wasn't healthy, that it needed to come down for safety reasons. That's when Murray relented.

Almost all future development in McLean



Keith Cline, director of the Urban Forest Management Division, gave an overview of the evolution of Fairfax County's Tree Ordinance.

MCLEAN OUTLOOK

will consist of infill development and redevelopment, which threatens many mature trees. When an older house on a lot with older trees is demolished to make way for a significantly larger house, many trees can come down in the process. Careful planning and expertise is required to preserve the trees which benefit the broader neighborhoods and the environment.

THE MCLEAN CITIZENS ASSOCIATION hosted the third annual Tree Forum Wednesday, April 20 at the McLean Community Center.

In addition to McLean Tree Foundation discussion of the importance and significance of trees to McLean and other communities, this year's forum featured a panel discussion involving citizens associations and developers.

More than 50 people attended the forum. "What we're trying to do tonight is bring groups together," said McLean Citizens Association president Jeff Barnett. "When reasonable groups get together, reasonable

ideas happen. Let's just talk for a while," he said.

"Let's make it count," said forum organizer Merrily Pierce.

Foust thanked the developers, which included Greg Ruff, of the Northern Virginia Building Industry Association and Louis Genuario Jr., president of Wakefield Homes, for coming Wednesday night.

"To get the industry to come talk with us and work with us is a big deal," said Supervisor John Foust. "They recognize the importance of trees to us."

NEIL ENDE voiced the frustration of McLean residents who feel helpless watching their neighborhoods that are named after forests and trees torn down to make way for larger houses.

"You have to appreciate that that is not the real world, that's not our world. You are the good guys, and that's why you are here," said Ende.

"There are bad developers," he said, who "play every game in the book." Some mark trees as diseased when they are healthy, he

said, "some developers tear down trees before plans are introduced."

"It is changing the fundamental aspect of the neighborhoods, house by house by house," he said.

"They know how to play the game," said Ende. "You don't see it because you do it right."

"Some do really good work," said Foust. "But there are those out there, my office sees, that should have done more to preserve tree canopy."

"We are concerned with unnecessary loss of trees," said Wallace Sansone, of Franklin Park.

"Is there anything that you, the building industry, can do to police this process?" asked Bob Vickers, Dranesville Tree Commissioner, who moderated the panel discussion.

THE TIME promised Ende, Sansone, and Margaret Malone, of Turkey Run Road, to ask planned questions was topped off prematurely.

But developers Genuario Jr. and Ruff offered an olive branch that gave hope.

They told Ende to call them if he witnesses a developer violating county code.

"If there is a builder disregarding the tree ordinance, then we want to know," said Ruff.

If the developers are members of the Northern Virginia Building Industry Association, Genuario said they would want to talk with them.

If they aren't, Genuario said, they could talk with the arborists and get feedback back to Ende.

"Concern about trees ties you with people from the past that agreed with you," said McLean historian Paul Kohlenberger, who gave a glimpse of McLean Citizens Association's history advocating for trees.

Organizers say the discussion last week was the only the beginning of collaborations between the county, citizens and developers.

"Trees rely on us. They need a community of caretakers and advocates, and that's what we are," said Joyce Harris, of the McLean Trees Foundation.