



# HISTORIC BELLE GROVE SQUARE NEIGHBORHOOD

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## Neighborhood Meeting

**Thurs., July 21<sup>st</sup>  
7:00pm - 8:30pm  
at St. Paul's UCC  
Bond & Green Sts.**

**w/ Westminster  
Police Chief Jeff  
Spaulding & Capt.  
Nancy Yeager**

**Join us and meet your  
great Belle Grove  
Square neighbors!**

## Neighborhood Development

by Mitchell Edmondson

Wow, June is here and it is almost summertime. The month of June will bring the completion of the new building at St. Paul's United Church of Christ. Although our neighborhood lost the historic Royer house, St Paul's has spent the time and money to rebuild a structure that nicely matches the main body of the church. Instead of an old house attached to a church, the new building has matching brick detail that ties it to existing historic structure. The new building should be open to the public at the end of June when St. Paul's UCC hosts Westminster's first Diversity Weekend.

Since I bought up the topic of historic properties, Sykesville has just been honored for its efforts to preserve historic buildings. Sykesville has received the Stewardship of Historic Properties by a government Agency award from the Board of Trustees of the Maryland Historical Trust. The award honors Sykesville for its

long track record of commitment to historic preservation. According to town manager Matt Candland, the town is focused on maintaining historic buildings while adding new construction that is complementary.

Our town of Westminster is fortunate to have many of its historic buildings still standing on Main Street. We have lost several historic structures to fire; however, we have lost others due to new construction. If you take a drive down Westminster's Main Street, you will notice several buildings have restored their store fronts. A grant was available that helped property owners fix up the front of their buildings. Sadly, on almost every block, there is an example of either an original building being replaced with a modern non historical conforming structure or a decades old fake façade covering the original structure. A glaring example is the BB&T building on the corner of Bond and Main Street. This building is covered with white bricks that have pink

poke-a-dots. In an area of 1800's era red brick buildings, this building definitely stands out - and not in a good way.

Maybe there is nothing wrong with letting our old buildings be replaced or altered? However, I would think that as we struggle to keep our main street alive, visitors and folks who live in the area would much rather visit an authentic looking main street than a street lined with a mixture of odd ball buildings. As a city, Westminster is struggling to keep its main street vibrant. Our current mayor and many others remember days when the sidewalks of Main Street were crowded by folks going downtown to do their shopping and socializing. Zoning and cheap property out on the highway has forever altered our downtown. This same scenario has played out in countless towns across our country. Main streets are struggling to remain alive. How do you get folks to come back to Main Street? If there are no visitors, there are businesses. If there are no

businesses, there are no visitors.

It is very easy to point out the problems; the real work is coming up with solutions. I am hoping that eventually ideas and solutions will be formulated to help our downtown. Saving historic downtowns is a national effort. There are no easy answers and no solutions that do not require both the action of an engaged City Hall and the input and involvement of local residents.

Recent newspaper stories have outlined plans to allow more housing to be built around our city. As noted in one story, many young folks who want to remain in Westminster are unable to do so because they cannot afford mega mansions on large tracts of land that ring our community. Maybe there is a way to build more affordable

housing in the heart of our community? If we had more folks living downtown, maybe we could attract a business or two to fill our empty store fronts?

Maybe our town needs something special to draw folks to Main Street. Maybe if we concentrated on trying to attract artists, antique stores, and other specialty shops like Ellicott City, our Main Street could regain some of its lost luster. Recent zoning changes are trying to create an art area up toward McDaniel College.

Most folks I talk to don't bother to visit downtown because of two things – lack of parking and lack of businesses. Maybe there is a better way of letting folks know about the parking garages downtown? Maybe there is a better way to let folks know about existing businesses?

## Yard Sale News

Despite the looming rain clouds, our second annual yard sale was an amazing success. Neighbors in our area along with those in nearby neighborhoods reported

that the crowds were good and that they made many sales. Much appreciation to all those who helped make this annual event a great success.

Special thanks to Darby McHugh,



Belle Grove Square neighborhood and the surrounding areas set up for last month's neighborhood yard sale. This year, participation extended to West Green and the surrounding streets, and had a great turnout despite the threat of rain over several weekends.



Members of Girl Scout Troop #1440 help Woman's Club of Westminster volunteer Norma Jean Swam in clearing weeds from the flower bed in Belle Grove Square Park, May 28, 2011.

Teresa Dick and Laurie Walters for all of their hard work making the event a great success!

the good work of Larry Bloom and his crew, the fountain is once again going and the park looks great.

## Woman's Club Park Flower Bed Work

When the Woman's Club tended to their flower bed in the park a few weeks ago, they got a helping hand from Girl Scout Troop #1440. Everyone had a great time weeding out the beds and helping make the park a beautiful space to be enjoyed by all. Our park has benefited from the wonderful work of the Westminster Woman's club for several decades.

Remember, if you have plants that you would like to share, please drop them by 1 Park Avenue and Mitchell will see that they are planted in the other flower beds maintained by neighborhood volunteers.

## Fountain Revived

As most of you have no doubt noticed, our fountain sprang to life last week. The installation of the equipment necessary to activate the fountain was delayed a few weeks because the city had to order a new part for the fountain. Thanks to

The fountain has played a big role in our park for many years. Originally a three tiered fountain graced our park. This fountain was eventually thrown away and it is even rumored that our original fountain was rescued and can be seen along the road to Taneytown.

Our fountain was a flower bed until 1976 when the City of Westminster and the Woman's league reinstalled the fountain in honor of the bicentennial.

## Live Music at the Library Stage

Every Friday at noon during the month of June, live music will be presented at the Lunch at the Library Concert Series. The free outdoor lunchtime concert will feature local & regional musicians; bring a blanket or lawn chair for seating. Rain Venue: Longwell Parking Deck, lower level.

During the month of July, the Songs at 6:30 Concert Series will be also be held at the Westminster Branch Library from 6:30 PM - 8:30 PM. Bring a blanket or lawn

chair for seating. Rain Venue: Longwell Parking Deck, lower level.

Contact: Stan Ruchlewicz (410) 848-5294 for more information about both events.

## Corbit's Charge

The presentation of the annual Corbit's Charge Event will be held on Saturday/Sunday, June 25/26, 2011. The living history event will commemorate the 148th anniversary of the Battle of Westminster. There will be infantry, artillery and cavalry demonstrations as well as crafts of the period. Sutlers and food service will be on site. A special part of the Saturday's event will be Base Ball Games based on the 1863 rules. The encampment opens both days at 10:00 a.m. and will be open to the public on Saturday until dark and Sunday until 4:00 p.m. The ball games are scheduled at 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. Saturday afternoon. The event is free to the public.

## July 7th Picnic!

The recent 90 degree plus weather reminds me that summer may not officially be here, but it is fast approaching. With summer

comes our annual picnic in the park. On July 7th we will be inviting neighbors and guest to gather around the fountain for an evening filled with great food and conversation. Once again Wayne will be grilling the hamburgers and hot dogs. It is not required but please feel free to bring a dish to share - the more the merrier!

The picnic is being held a little earlier this year so it isn't right before National Night Out for crime prevention, which is coming up on Tuesday August 2, 2011 when we'll have free ice cream in the park to help fight the summer heat!

## Downtown Farmers Market Weekly

The Downtown Westminster Farmers Market has resumed and just a short walk from our neighborhood a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, and herbs, meats (including beef, chicken, lamb, and pork), eggs, raw milk cheese, artisan breads, baked goods (including cakes, cookies, muffins, and pies), coffee, jams and jellies, and dog treats are being sold by local farmers. Fresh goodies can be found just a few blocks from our neighborhood on Saturdays - May 28th through November 19th - 8:00am to 12:00pm at the

Conaway Municipal Parking Lot on Route 27, approximately 2 blocks North of the intersection of Main Street and Rt 27 in Downtown Westminster.

On Tuesdays, June 7th through November 19th - 3:30pm to 6:30pm in the Antique Mall parking lot on the corner of rt. 27 and Hahn road you will also be able to purchase fresh produce, artisan breads, baked goods, jams and jellies, and more!

## Neighborhood Newsletter Honored

On June 2, 2011 we received news that our Historic Belle Grove Square newsletter was a recipient of the USA "Neighborhood Newsletter" Award. The Neighborhoods, USA (NUSA) is a national non-profit organization committed to building and strengthening neighborhood organizations. Among national printed newsletters, our newsletter was awarded a Bronze level award. Only four newsletters in the North Eastern part of the United States received an award. The Greater Raleigh Court Civic League of Roanoke, Virginia, the Old Southwest, Inc. also from Roanoke, Virginia, the Eau Claire Community Council of Columbia, South Carolina, and the Historic Belle Grove Square Neighborhood of Westminster, Maryland were honored during the NUSA's annual conference held in Anchorage, Alaska held the week of May 25-28th. Newsletters entries were evaluated individually and award points based on criteria that included layout, consistency, content, relevance and overall appearance.

The Greater Raleigh Court Civic League was organized in 1978 after neighbors rallied together to protest a zoning variance. From that knot of concerned citizens has grown the neighborhood organization that exists today to preserve the character of their

community and promote the welfare of its citizens.

Old Southwest, Inc. began in the 1970's as the Old Southwest Neighborhood Alliance. It was formed to coordinate efforts to save the neighborhood from further destruction (22 buildings were razed in one year). Old Southwest, Inc. remains vigilant and involved on a daily basis on issues affecting the health and promotion of the neighborhood.

The Eau Claire Community Council of Columbia, South Carolina was formed in 1988 and unites nearly 40 different neighborhoods in the Eau Clair/ North Columbia area of South Carolina.

For a neighborhood that's only been organized just a few years, we seem to be keeping really great company with these folks!

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Letters to the editor  
are welcomed. Letters  
submitted may be edited  
for space or clarity.

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Westminister Farmer's Market is just getting set up, June 4, 2011.





A great Memorial Day parade was held May 30, 2011 through Downtown Westminster, a block from Historic Belle Grove Square. Just a few of the many scenes that day are depicted above, including active duty and veteran military personnel, community groups, civil war reenactors and many historical vehicles and contingents. The City of Westminster works hard to put on so many great events each year!