

REAL ESTATE

HOMES FOR SALE, GENERAL CLASSIFIED

SATURDAY, JULY 29, 2000

Heading for the Hills in Fairfax County

Neighbors Maintain an Open-Door Policy

By CHERYL KENNY
Special to The Washington Post

Imagine a house with three bedrooms, a bath or two, perhaps a family room. Put it on a quarter-acre lot with mature shrubs and trees, probably a patio or deck. Now imagine a selling price of about \$200,000. You're thinking Manassas, maybe, or Frederick? Try inside the Capital Beltway.

This is Pimmit Hills, a 633-acre neighborhood of tree-lined streets near Tysons Corner in Fairfax County and within minutes of several major highways.

"The Hills," as many residents call it, is a place of great diversity and imagination, both in the houses evolving there and the people who live in them.

On one street is a prim white ranch with black shutters, a manicured lawn and a well-tended rose garden. On the next street is a house of butterscotch yellow sporting a whimsical "garden" of plastic flamingos and leprechauns, with whirligigs and green artificial turf decorating the walkway. In the driveway of one home is a spotless motorboat carefully covered; in another are a half-dozen vans and vintage vehicles jammed into the driveway and along the curb. There are children riding bikes, neighbors visiting on front porches and people walking their dogs.

As six-year residents, they say, "This is not only our home, but we have their children and another person living here."

The neighborhood was developed in the late 1940s with a mix of styles for returning veterans. Pimmit Drive, a main thoroughfare, has subdivisions, including Pimmit View, Manassas Park and Manassas Park.

The "typical" house is about 1,280 square feet, the most common is a three-bedroom, one-and-a-half-bath frame structure with a finished basement, space, according to a survey by Banker Steven Griffin. Some are box-like houses with no character, but many have their own personality. Owners have built houses with unique features.

As the house market has cooled, the neighborhood's popularity has grown. Tired auto mechanics and other businesses have moved to the earliest residential neighborhood in the area. Home of a motorcade route.

And Griffin says he has not committed that in the past. He resists buying homes in the area for mere \$50,000, but he says the area has a pretty bad reputation.

See PIMMIT HILLS, page 10.



Chris Kutschenreuter, left, a 26-year resident of Pimmit Hills, takes a walk in the back yard with her dog, Mini. Butterflies, right, have also made her property their home.



REAL ESTATE 2

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As six-year resident Jennifer Baker put it, "This is not one of those places where people have their doors shut and you never see another person. This is a living place."

The neighborhood was founded in the late 1940s with the construction of homes for returning World War II veterans near Pimmit Drive. It grew to include several subdivisions, including Orchard Crest, Pimmit View, Magarity Heights and Sportsman's Park.

The "typical" Pimmit Hills house—about 1,280 of the more than 1,600 homes—was a three-bedroom, one-bath, 883-square-foot frame structure built on a slab or crawl space, according to Bill Bolinger of Coldwell Banker Stevens, Realtors. The versatile, box-like houses are easy to enlarge. Many have their own distinctive styles because owners have bumped out or popped up.

As the houses have changed, so has the neighborhood's character. Jack Barnes, a retired auto mechanic and one of the Hills' earliest residents, said that in the 1960s the neighborhood was made infamous as the home of a motorcycle gang, the Pagans.

And Griffith Road resident Greg Gil admitted that in the 1970s, when he could not resist buying his Pimmit Hills house for a mere \$50,000, "the neighborhood had a pretty bad reputation." Gil, an elevator me-

See PIMMIT HILLS, H3, Col. 1

WHERE WE LIVE

Pimmit Hills



BOUNDARIES: Leesburg Pike (Route 7) on the south; Pimmit Drive curving from north to east; Magarity Road on the west.

HOUSE SALES: In 1999, 74 houses on the multiple listing service were sold, with prices ranging from \$130,000 to \$229,900, with an average sales price of \$165,182, said Bill and Kitty Bollinger of Coldwell Banker Stevens, Realtors. This year 27 such houses have sold for \$119,900 to \$239,900, with an average sales price of \$183,888.

SCHOOLS: Lemon Road and Westgate elementary, Kilmer middle, and Marshall high schools.

WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE: Tysons-Pimmit Regional Library, Pimmit Hills Alternative High School and Adult Center, Tysons Corner mall complex, Tysons Station and the Commons shopping centers, as well as several parks.



Chris Kutschenreuter, left, a 26-year resident of Pimmit Hills, takes a walk in the back yard with her dog, Mini. Butterflies, right, have also made her property their home.





PHOTOS BY BILL CRANDALL FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Jennifer and Joe Baker visit their neighbor Chris Kutschenreuter, who says the community spirit is one of the neighborhood's attractions.

The Hills Are Alive in Fairfax County

PIMMIT HILLS, From H1

chanic, remembers "roaming dogs and hearing gunshots on the Fourth of July."

But as new people, especially young families, were attracted to the community, things began to change. "Now there's no more gun shooting, the dogs are on leashes, and healthy people are jogging the streets," Gil said, laughing.

Cindy Kwitchoff, who first became familiar with Pimmit Hills during the late 1980s, also found the neighborhood unappealing at first. "People would sit outside on the top of their cars. Houses weren't kept very nice."

But as the economy boomed, Kwitchoff saw a transformation. "Houses started being renovated," she said. "New people moved in and were focused on fix-ups. There were more families, more money." So when Kwitchoff decided in 1998 that she was ready to become a homeowner, she had her real estate agent look exclusively in Pimmit Hills. And although she has expected to feel the "buyer's remorse" her friends warned about, it has never hit.

"I love the neighborhood, the yard, the close-in location," she said. "And I plan to stay here a while."

This turnaround is largely because "a lot of young professionals, including dot-com types, are finding the location desirable," said Doug Morris, a real estate appraiser and agent with Fox Hunt Realty who lives in Pimmit Hills. Morris, a former builder, bought his house in 1986, after seeing "the virgin timber" on the 13,000-square-foot lot. The house needed work, but, at more than 2,000 square feet, was one of the neighborhood's biggest, a status Morris believes it has since lost as the standard three-bedroom, one-bath place continues "going by the wayside."

The Pimmit Hills Citizens Association, led by Joe Baker, a building engineer, and his wife, Jennifer, a trade association executive, focuses primarily on community issues rather than social activities. The Bakers said the association has addressed such concerns as cut-through traffic, the



Many of the houses in Pimmit Hills have been expanded to provide more living space. Originally less than 900 square feet, some homes now have 2,000 square feet or more.

completion of sidewalks throughout the neighborhood, and—although the overwhelming majority of homes are attractive and well-maintained—the rundown condition of some properties.

Kwitchoff, who edits the association's monthly newsletter, also cited a recent heated debate about a resident who cut down every tree on his lot to avoid raking leaves. Kwitchoff said that since the association has no authority to dictate what residents can do to their houses or yards—a fact many of Pimmit Hills' independent-minded residents applaud—it chose to educate residents about the value of old-growth trees through a newsletter article. Similarly, when an issue was raised about residents renovating without proper permits, the association arranged for a county zoning department employee to speak to its members about building requirements.

Many residents described Pimmit Hills as a friendly place with a stimulating mix of ethnic cultures, tradespeople and professionals, families and retirees. One resident, Chris Kutschenreuter, recalled that it took her a while to appreciate the neighborhood, and that she became a fan "primarily because I have outstanding neighbors—it's a very caring place." She has remained in her house for more than 26 years.

Morris agreed that the Hills has "a true sense of community." He said, "On any given day you can smell the barbecues, see neighbors on their fences conversing. And many of the young people moving into the neighborhood seem to feel a real responsibility for their elderly and fixed-income neighbors."

He added, "Pimmit Hills has been a best-kept secret. I almost hate to let the cat out of the bag."