

Vision of a New Woodbridge White Paper



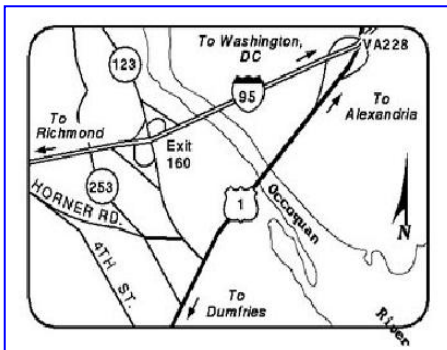
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A NEW WOODBRIDGE

Woodbridge is at the intersection of old and new, historic and modern, traditional and contemporary. Located on Interstate 95 in Prince William County, just 20 miles south of the nation's capital, the Woodbridge Magisterial District is a diverse community of over 51,000 residents. This increasingly urban community is rich in history and culture, natural resources and community amenities. With a strong foundation of established neighborhoods and existing businesses, Woodbridge also offers a wealth of opportunity for thoughtfully planned town center, commercial and mixed-use development.

The blending of new and old sensibilities makes Woodbridge a unique community in Prince William County and in all of Northern Virginia. Its distinct character positions Woodbridge as a prime location for innovative community design, quality development, and commercial and residential revitalization. At this critical juncture, our community is working toward the creation of a New Woodbridge, with a vision for better development, better transit and better neighborhoods.

Woodbridge Today



The Woodbridge District's exceptional location provides residents and businesses with access to a robust infrastructure. Interstate 95, U.S. Route 1, Prince William Parkway and a portion of Route 123 traverse the Woodbridge District. Other primary and secondary roads link neighborhoods to major arteries and community amenities. Mass transit is available in Woodbridge via a rail line extending the length of the district; two train stations with access to the Virginia

Railway Express (VRE) and Amtrak; multiple commuter lots with free parking; bus service for commuting and intra-county travel; and an entrepreneurial, self-managed "slug" commuter system. Every weekday, more than 900 riders use the Woodbridge VRE Station and nearly 4,700 Woodbridge residents use the commuter and local bus service.

The quality of the local education system is a key factor when any family or company chooses a community. The Prince William Public School Division is one of the finest in the nation, as exemplified through test scores, school rankings, scholar and teacher recognition, and school-based specialty programs. In fact, all eligible high schools in Prince William County are ranked among the top 5% in the nation. The Woodbridge

District is home to 10 elementary schools, three middle schools and one high school, which offers a specialty program in environmental and natural science. Sites for an additional middle school and elementary school have been acquired to serve the growing population in the South Woodbridge and Dumfries areas. Parents in the Woodbridge District also have the choice of quality private and parochial schools, including the new Pope John Paul the Great Catholic High School.

Higher education and workforce development programs are easily accessible. The Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC) Woodbridge Campus, accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, borders Woodbridge and offers more than 160 certificate programs and associate degrees. In keeping with our community's belief in lifelong education, NVCC also offers a range of continuing education courses and programs to serve the needs of local employers. A new George Mason University facility, the Potomac Environmental Research and Education Center, is planned for North Woodbridge, while the University's Prince William and Fairfax campuses are each less than 20 miles away.

Health care is another critical piece of community infrastructure. Woodbridge is home to Potomac Hospital, a 183-bed, community hospital. For 35 years, Potomac Hospital has provided quality health care to Prince William residents. It offers a range of medical specialties, a highly qualified medical and clinical staff, and state-of-the-art technology in a community-oriented environment. Two fire and rescue stations within the Woodbridge District, and a third under construction, ensure rapid, quality response to medical and fire-related emergencies.

Woodbridge offers varied recreational opportunities for resident and visitors alike. With the Occoquan and Potomac rivers at its northern and eastern boundaries, Woodbridge has a scenic shoreline and significant waterfront access. The Occoquan Bay and Featherstone National Wildlife Refuges set aside nearly 1,000 acres as protected habitat for plant and animal species, including bald eagles and ospreys. The 508-acre Leesylvania State Park, located on the Potomac River, offers fishing, boating, picnic and hiking. Ten county-owned parks in the Woodbridge District provide numerous sport fields, basketball and tennis courts, two outdoor pools, a community center, playgrounds, an in-line skating facility, a skateboard facility, and a variety of picnic areas and open space. A county Senior Center provides educational, leisure and nutritional services for local seniors.

Once a rich hunting ground for the Dogue Indians, Woodbridge is also home to history and culture. Rippon Lodge, built circa 1747, offers a glimpse into American history with public tours and educational programs in a bucolic setting. The house is located

along the original Kings Highway, which connected the 13 original colonies and played a crucial role in the Revolutionary War. Trails at Leesylvania State Park lead to the ancestral home of the “Light Horse” Harry Lee’s family. The cultural arts are available through theater, choral and orchestral groups that perform regularly in the Woodbridge area. SciencePort, which will be the only science center located between Baltimore and Richmond, is planned for Belmont Bay in North Woodbridge.

Other community amenities are also in place: The 18,000-square-foot Potomac Community Library serves Woodbridge residents. Potomac Town Center’s upscale shopping complex illustrated its potential with the 2008 opening of a Wegmans gourmet supermarket and plans for future shopping and restaurants. Woodbridge residents live within a few minutes’ drive of Potomac Mills, which boasts more than 200 brand-name outlet stores and top-of-the-line cinemas. The community’s increasing diversity has also meant the opening of ethnic restaurants and specialty stores in Woodbridge.

A Changing Community

With so much already in place in the Woodbridge District, why is a New Woodbridge vision even necessary?

First, consider the monumental changes that have been occurring in our community. While Prince William County has experienced tremendous growth and diversification, nowhere has the change been as evident as in the Woodbridge District. A few decades ago, Woodbridge was primarily a bedroom community comprised of young families, a relatively homogeneous population, and limited community retail and employment. A quick demographic overview highlights how much times have changed in Woodbridge and the county as a whole:

- Between 2000 and 2008, the Woodbridge District’s population increased by 31%.
- The number of housing units in the Woodbridge District increased by nearly 35% during those same eight years.
- In the 2000 Census, the Woodbridge District reported a Hispanic population of 17.5%
- Between 2001 and 2008, when Prince William County’s population increased by 80,000 people, 94 of every 100 new residents were Hispanic, African American or Asian American.
- The Prince William County Public School Division now serves a “majority minority” population. Many students in the Woodbridge District speak English as a second language.

- Prince William County's median household income makes it one of the most affluent communities in the nation, while its residents' higher educational attainment exceeds the national average.
- The population of residents in Prince William County over age 65 doubled from 3% to 6% between 1990 and 2007 and the median age increased slightly.
- The number of Prince William County workers who travel 60 or more minutes to work is more than twice the national average.

These immense demographic shifts—coupled with the certainty of further growth and change—begin to explain the drive toward a New Woodbridge that accommodates *all* residents. Other factors, including the strain of rapid growth on our critical infrastructure, also provide impetus for change. Traffic congestion, for example, is a major concern of Woodbridge residents. Gridlock is commonplace along Route 1 and Interstate 95 during morning and evening rush hours as residents struggle to get to and from their daily activities—work, school, errands, home. Other indications of infrastructure stress are visible along Route 1, which serves as the transportation and business backbone of the Woodbridge District. This community gateway is a visual clutter of utility wires, lights poles and signage, where design standards and consistency were often overtaken by the need for rapid construction.



Residential development in Woodbridge has also undergone a series of shifts and changes in recent years. First, the Woodbridge District contains a large percentage of Prince William County's older neighborhoods where many residents raised their families and helped build the community. Some of these neighborhoods are in need of maintenance and revitalization, as well as a feeling of connection to new neighborhoods and amenities. Residents in newer neighborhoods like Belmont Bay and Port Potomac have equally high expectations for their community. Meanwhile, as the Woodbridge District's population has diversified, cultural tension between older and newer residents has sometimes emerged, creating a need for new strategies to connect neighbors, neighborhoods and communities. Finally, during the nation's housing market collapse, Woodbridge has experienced a higher percentage of foreclosures than Prince William County as a whole. In late 2008, nearly 4% of homes in the Woodbridge District were in foreclosure.

Significant changes are also underway in the economy of the Woodbridge District. With the exception of the Potomac Hospital area, a few professional office buildings, and industrial uses in designated areas, employment in the Woodbridge District has been primarily limited to retail and commercial services. Automobile dealerships and vehicle service stations dot the district, intermingled with strip retail centers. The

majority of development in these established commercial areas occurred without the benefit of cohesive community design standards. Fortunately, several newer, mixed-use developments along the corridor are implementing pedestrian connections and attempting to integrate varied uses in a way that duplicates traditional villages and town centers. Additionally, the impact of Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC) activities at Quantico Marine Corps Base and nearby Fort Belvoir will mean a net gain of more than 24,000 personnel on the bases as well as spin-off contractor activities, for which Woodbridge is an ideal location.

Best of Both Worlds

These immense demographic and economic changes are the catalysts for a New Woodbridge vision. The array of assets and obstacles, challenges and opportunities facing the Woodbridge District demands a comprehensive vision for future development and revitalization. As a result, elected officials, business leaders and community residents have come to understand that Woodbridge will only reach its potential if they work toward a common purpose, steering the direction of change and growth.

So what kind of community are we working toward? A vibrant community where residents can move about with ease, where development is thoughtfully planned, and where neighborhoods and businesses thrive. Smart growth principles are incorporated throughout the New Woodbridge vision, recognizing the unbreakable link between quality development and quality of life. High-density, mixed-used development – including office, residential, retail and civic/green space – is at the heart of the vision. At the same time, the vision recognizes Woodbridge’s unique resources: its deep history, its diverse neighborhoods, its varied demographics and its role as a gateway to Prince William County.

This vision for a New Woodbridge also connects to a larger concept for Prince William County. The report of the *Future Commission 2030* describes a collective vision of what citizens want life to be like in Prince William County in 2030. The report describes “seven golden threads” which articulate a clear image of what the citizens want: 1) a community where people can live, work, play and retire, 2) an active, engaged citizenry, 3) a strong sense of community, 4) a 24/7 accessibility for all residents, 5) public infrastructure to match the population, 6) community partnerships as the foundation for success, and 7) a community that leads the way for the Commonwealth and the nation.

The New Woodbridge vision complements these larger community aspirations for 2030. A New Woodbridge with thriving neighborhoods and commercial ventures will certainly contribute to “the big picture” of a more prosperous and dynamic Prince William County. Ultimately, achieving the vision for the future of Woodbridge is contingent upon three core elements:

- Better Development
- Better Transportation
- Better Neighborhoods

Vision for Better Development



New Woodbridge will incorporate high-quality, well-designed and carefully planned development. Smart growth principles like varied housing choices, a vibrant mix of land uses, walkable neighborhoods, preserved open space, a strong sense of place and community/business collaboration will serve as the foundation for future development and revitalization. As Woodbridge continues to attract diverse residents with varied needs and desires, it is crucial that the community is shaped by these smart growth principles, which link viable development with an enviable quality of life.

Some new and planned communities in the Woodbridge District are already incorporating these principles into their design and development. A few examples include the Belmont Bay community in North Woodbridge, Potomac Town Center under development in the heart of the Woodbridge District, and the Rivergate community on the Occoquan River.

Belmont Bay is a charming waterfront community with an architecturally distinct mix of condominiums, townhouses and single family homes. This neo-traditional neighborhood is walkable to the Woodbridge VRE Station and located on the Occoquan River. Belmont Bay features the Osprey Golf Club and Ospreys Landing Restaurant as well as a full-service marina, waterfront walking paths, recreation amenities and neighborhood green spaces. Belmont Bay, which is adjacent to the Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge, will also be the future home of the SciencePort discovery center and the new George Mason University environmental science facility.

Potomac Town Center also fits the vision of a New Woodbridge. Roadside Development is employing many smart growth principles in this new development. In keeping with the vision of an accessible community, Potomac Town Center is located less than five miles from the Rippon Landing VRE Station and between two major interchanges on Interstate 95. Ultimately, Potomac Town Center will incorporate 650,000 square feet of retail, including the existing Wegmans, lifestyle retail and full-service restaurants; 500,000 square feet of office space; and 500 residential units. Plans feature a pedestrian-friendly, boulevard environment with outdoor dining and a vibrant urban atmosphere.

Rivergate, a luxury high-rise condominium community on the Occoquan River, is being developed by the IDI Group. Rivergate is a key part of the revitalization of North Woodbridge, which is a prominent gateway to Prince William County. Three 15-story buildings plus a 10, 000 square-foot clubhouse will be located on the waterfront. The complex will be a short distance from Interstate 95, Route 1, the Woodbridge VRE station and a potential ferry system. The planned Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail will also connect Rivergate with other communities from the town of Occoquan to Belmont Bay.

Each of these new neighborhoods will bring a distinct character and new amenities to Woodbridge. As envisioned, these and other new developments will focus on outstanding housing, an excellent quality of life, plus transportation and pedestrian access. These new communities will combine with the existing housing stock in Woodbridge to expand our range of housing choices. In turn, this diverse housing stock along two major transportation corridors will expand economic development in Woodbridge and increase opportunities for public transportation.

Vision for Better Transportation

Providing adequate transportation infrastructure and access is a major issue for Woodbridge, Prince William County and all of metropolitan Washington. As our community grows, more drivers with more automobiles put stress on the existing road network. The Prince William County Government has tried to alleviate the problem by creating its own transportation department, funding numerous road projects through public bonds and participating in multi-modal mass transit initiatives.

With its enviable location along major transportation routes plus future plans for high-density, mixed-used development and revitalized neighborhoods, the New Woodbridge will serve as a major hub for mass transit in Prince William County. Mass transit will be available to residents in new and established neighborhoods as well as

business owners and visitors. The transportation infrastructure will also be upgraded to increase capacity, move commuters more efficiently through Woodbridge and improve access within the community.

Interstate 95 Widening: The Virginia Department of Transportation has started a road construction project on Interstate 95 to create a fourth lane on each side of the highway in Prince William and Fairfax Counties. The fourth lane will stretch from the Purple Heart Bridge in Woodbridge to Lorton Road in Fairfax County. This project has been phased into three different sections beginning in early summer 2009. VDOT estimates the project cost at \$123 million dollars over the span of the project. An additional lane of highway will add more capacity to bring commuters to and from Woodbridge.

Route 1 Widening: The widening of Route 1 from the Stafford County line to the Fairfax County is a long-anticipated upgrade to Woodbridge's commercial and residential corridor. When the entire widening project is complete, Route 1 will include three northbound lanes and three southbound lanes, with a landscaped median. To enhance safety and access for pedestrians and bicyclists, sidewalks will be provided on one side of the roadway with a trail on the opposite side. The far right lanes in both directions will be wide enough to accommodate in-lane bicyclists.

Prince William County's 2006 road bond package included nearly \$100 million to begin work on the widening of Route 1, starting with two segments: Featherstone Road south to Neabsco Mills Road and Brady's Hill Road south to Joplin Road. The design of both segments is underway. Property acquisition is in process for the Brady's Hill-Joplin segment, while utility relocation and construction could begin later this year. Additionally, construction of the 6-lane bridge on Route 1 over Neabsco Creek is underway in the Woodbridge District and should be completed in mid-2012. This newly widened bridge will be raised from its previous elevation to alleviate flooding.

North Woodbridge Interchange: This critical project will improve access for commuter and local traffic at a heavily used interchange in the Woodbridge District. The project is a key feature in revitalization plans for North Woodbridge, which are discussed further on page 10. Design of the interchange must be completed, and property continues to be acquired. Construction of the interchange will include the widening of Route 1 from Dawson Beach Road to the bridge, and the county has set aside funds for architectural enhancements so the new overpass will create an appropriate gateway feature for the community.

New Transit Options: Our vision for a New Woodbridge includes more innovative, efficient and effective transportation. Prince William County has obtained grants to determine the feasibility of implementing two proposed transit initiatives. The first option is a ferry service from Woodbridge to the Pentagon and Navy Yard. A [Ferry Summit](#) that included a route proving exercise was held May, 2009. The Woodbridge District's location along the waterfront makes ferry service a logical, practical alternative for commuters and visitors. The second option is Bus Rapid Transit along the Route 1 corridor. Bus Rapid Transit uses high-speed buses with their own dedicated lanes to move through traffic. The system has been employed in several countries as a viable alternative to light rail.

Trail Connections: Among several projects to build and connect public access trails, Prince William County recently dedicated an eight-mile segment of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail, which is a multi-purpose trail connecting historical and recreational sites. The county's portion of the Potomac Heritage Trail is part of a larger trail system planned from the Northern Neck to West Virginia. The county is currently evaluating the alignment and cost of key trail segments in the Woodbridge District.

Vision for Better Neighborhoods

Too often, as communities look toward a more prosperous future, they abandon their own heritage. Long-time residents, established businesses and mature neighborhoods are left behind. Not so in a New Woodbridge. We value our older and newer communities, recognizing the worth each neighborhood brings to residents who have a variety of needs and wants. Numerous county programs and processes are designed to maintain and improve the quality of Woodbridge neighborhoods as we move forward.

Code Enforcement: Neighbors in older areas sometimes face problems with community maintenance, such as inoperable vehicles on private property, sheds and decks built without proper permits or inspections, unsightly junk or trash, and tall grass or weeds in yards. The Woodbridge District actively participates in the county's Property Code Enforcement Program to ensure that structures are well-maintained for the health and safety of residents. To help everyone be a good neighbor, information about local property standards and regulations is often disseminated to residents in multiple languages.

Community Organizations: The Woodbridge District Office often partners with homeowners and condominium associations, which have internal resources to address neighborhood problems. In addition, the Clean Community Council assists businesses

and homes with graffiti removal, and volunteer groups often host cleanups for public spaces in Woodbridge.

Neighborhood University: Prince William County created the Neighborhood University, which offers classes in code enforcement, traffic calming, community organization, environmental, homeowners association responsibilities, and conflict resolution. In addition, a new Neighborhood Leaders Group connects residents who are interested in neighborhood improvement with county employees who are responsible for prevention deterioration in neighborhoods. Woodbridge residents who participate in the Neighborhood University or the Neighborhood Leaders Group bring back new resources, skills and ideas to preserve and improve their own neighborhoods.

Neighborhood Watch: Prince William County has one of the nation's most successful Neighborhood Watch programs, and numerous Woodbridge communities actively participate. Through Neighborhood Watch, residents work with the Police Department to deter crime and make communities safer. In Prince William County's 230 Neighborhood Watch communities, citizens organize themselves and work with the Police Department to keep a trained eye and ear on their communities. Participating neighborhoods receive crime reports, crime alerts and other essential information.

Supporting the Vision

To bring a New Woodbridge to fruition, our vision must be in sync with broader plans and processes for Prince William County, from the Comprehensive Plan to zoning regulations and construction standards. The Comprehensive Plan provides "a clear strategy for responsible, fiscally-sound growth to produce a vibrant, prosperous, stable, livable community." The plan is a long-term guide to land use throughout the county and reflects varied aspects of land use, including demographics, environmental issues, telecommunications and housing. The Comprehensive Plan also incorporates sector plans for specific areas of the county, offering a potential process for implementing the land use vision of a New Woodbridge.

Prince William County has also approved the Potomac Communities Revitalization Plan, a planning initiative that focuses on a 34-square mile corridor surrounding Route 1. The goal is to create a premier residential, business and visitor location on the Potomac River. Because one of its key components is a master zoning plan for North Woodbridge, the New Woodbridge vision will coordinate with the Potomac Communities Revitalization Plan to ensure they work toward a common vision.

Additionally, Prince William County already has in place significant economic development, land use and development services. These public services will be invaluable for investors, developers and community leaders in creating a New Woodbridge.

The Prince William Department of Economic Development markets the community to prospective businesses, compiles market data about the county, helps businesses identify the best location for their project, assists existing businesses with operation expansions, serves as a liaison with Prince William County agencies that issue permits and licenses, and offers access to customized training and work force development resources.

The Prince William County Office of Planning works with citizens and elected officials to identify current and future land use and public facility needs of Prince William County. The office also reviews development applications for rezoning, special use permits, site and subdivision plans, Comprehensive Plan amendments and appeals/variances.

The Department of Development Services was recently created by the Board of County Supervisors in an effort to streamline services. This new department brings the Land Development Division from the Planning Office and the Building Development Division from the Department of Public Works into a unified organizational structure. The department helps customers efficiently navigate the rules, regulations and policies relating to commercial development. Development Services' project approach also ensures that customers receive comprehensive, seamless service. Department employees first identify the approvals and permits a customer needs to make their project viable. Employees then work in partnership with the customer throughout the process, from providing early assistance and information to coordinating close-out and occupancy of the completed project.

Implementing the Vision

In 2008, we made the first downpayment on the vision of a New Woodbridge through the North Woodbridge Charrette. This process exemplifies the three core elements of our community vision and will serve as a model for improvements in all parts of the Woodbridge District. The North Woodbridge Charrette brought together more than 200 citizens, transportation officials, planners, architects, developers, and elected officials from the federal, state and local governments. Participants in this intensive session examined community strengths and weaknesses, identified desires for the

future, developed a broad vision for North Woodbridge, and brainstormed a specific, credible redevelopment plan spanning nearly 200 acres on the Occoquan River.

The North Woodbridge area is generally bounded by Interstate 95, Horner Road, Route 1 and the Occoquan River. The area, a gateway into Prince William County and the Potomac Communities, has the potential to provide employment opportunities in an environment that supports transit use and pedestrian activity. As envisioned in the charrette, future development in North Woodbridge will focus on urban, mixed-use development with high- and mid-rise residential, office space and specialty retail. These mixed-use developments will be connected through excellent transportation infrastructure and pedestrian-friendly streetscapes.

The future for North Woodbridge will also include a Transit Triangle to link the Town of Occoquan, North Woodbridge and Belmont Bay. This triangle is bounded by: 1) the I-95/Route 123 Commuter Lot, which will ultimately serve the HOV and HOT Lanes and Bus Rapid Transit, 2) future commuter ferry service at the Occoquan Marina and 3) the VRE and Amtrak Station at Woodbridge. Part of the North Woodbridge vision also includes developing an acceptable, accessible design for the improved Route 1 interchange with Route 123. Goals for the interchange include eliminating the grade separation over Route 1 and providing convenient pedestrian access to the Woodbridge VRE Station.

As discussed by charrette participants, the plan for North Woodbridge will require us to leverage federal, state and local tools and resources. Opportunities range from the creation of a business improvement district to bonus densities, incremental development and redevelopment incentives. Public and private funding sources will need to be combined as we move forward with development, revitalization and transportation projects. All of the changes must be completed in coordination with county land use plans and processes.

Getting Involved

The vision for a New Woodbridge incorporates both the traditional and contemporary elements of our community, building on our solid foundation and leveraging new opportunities. We believe the combination of better development, better transportation and better neighborhoods will ensure a high quality of life for our citizens, protect our rich natural environment and create a robust economic engine for the community.

Obviously, progress on the vision is well underway, from the North Woodbridge Charrette to feasibility studies for ferry and Bus Rapid Transit service. Those steps are only the beginning. To advance our efforts, community volunteers have created the Woodbridge Potomac Communities Civic Association, with a mission to unite Woodbridge communities in addressing land use, environment transportation, development and civic issues. The association members want to see a New Woodbridge and are willing to work together to make it happen.

Woodbridge District Supervisor Frank Principi, who helped launch the campaign for a New Woodbridge, is a leading advocate for this community-driven vision. He and his office are dedicating time, energy and financial resources to support initiatives relating to a New Woodbridge. Many activities, like the North Woodbridge Charrette, are occurring under the auspices of the Supervisor Principi's office.

Although the current economic recession is impacting Woodbridge and other communities throughout the nation, its effects are likely to be short term. In general, recent demographic trends in the Woodbridge District are expected to continue well into the future: population growth, increasing diversity, relatively high levels of education and affluence. Now is the time for the Woodbridge District to crystallize its vision for community revitalization and development. When the economy stabilizes and investors become energized, when BRAC initiatives are implemented and the spin-off effects reach nearby communities, when residents begin looking for new homes and neighborhoods, we will have our vision for a New Woodbridge in place and strategies ready to implement.

The Woodbridge District is actively seeking quality economic development and is committed to assisting investors with their development projects. The best way to understand the Woodbridge District and its future vision is to see it firsthand. We encourage prospective investors, developers and commercial real estate professionals to visit our community and spend time with representatives of the Woodbridge District Office and other community organizations. You will have a chance to experience the wealth of economic opportunities available in Woodbridge.

Contact the Woodbridge Magisterial District Office at (703) 792-4646 to arrange a meeting or visit our web site at <http://www.NewWoodbridge.org> for the latest information about a New Woodbridge.