

Woodbury City Update

March 2003 • Volume 4, No. 3

Come play in the park!

Lookout Ridge grand opening is March 23-29

If your kids like climbing cliffs and trees, or if they seek adventures like exploring caves, then they will love Woodbury's new state-of-the-art playground, Lookout Ridge, where they can play all day without worrying about the weather.

Lookout Ridge indoor playground, located on the lower level of Central Park, boasts a themed, lifelike design and sound effects that accompany slides, forests, a tree house, and even a cave.

Kids can climb inside cliffs imitating the St. Croix River Valley, then zoom down a mountain spiral slide emerging from a cave. Children also will venture to the top of the tree house, cross over to the gigantic fallen tree, and race down a 30-foot superslide!

The playground will open to the public Monday, March 17, at 10 a.m. A grand opening celebration, with free entertainment, prize drawings and discounted play sessions, is planned during the week of March 23-29. Cups 'N' Scoops coffee shop, also located in Central Park, is expected to open in mid-March.

Daily admission to the park is \$5 for children age 1 and up. Reduced rates will be offered at certain times on weekdays. In addition, Woodbury residents may purchase a punch card that provides a 20 percent discount.

Throughout grand opening week, residents who purchase a \$40 resident punch pass to the playground will get one free admission to the playground for the day they bought the pass. In addition, all kids age 12 and under will be admitted for just \$3 all day Thursday, March 27!

Visitors can receive \$1 off admission by donating a canned good or by wearing a shirt with the word "Woodbury" on it. Canned good and T-shirt discounts are valid throughout grand opening week, except for Thursday, March 27, when reduced rates will be charged. Just one discount is allowed per patron.



Kids can climb lifelike cliffs and race down giant slides at Lookout Ridge.

Grand opening events

Grand opening festivities will begin Sunday, March 23, at 1 p.m. Kilter, a light rock band, will be entertaining in the Central Park amphitheater at 2 p.m. Families can also enjoy playing bingo and eating ice cream at Sundae Bingo from 2 to 4 p.m. in the Valley Creek Room. Cost of Sundae Bingo is \$3 per person; the Kilter performance is free.

Joining the grand opening festivities on Thursday, March 27, will be magician Don Carlson, who will fascinate youngsters in the Central Park amphitheater at 11 a.m. Throughout grand opening week, there also will be daily drawings for prizes.

The playground is open Monday through Thursday, from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Friday, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Saturday, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.; and Sunday, from 1 to 5 p.m. However, the playground will close at 3 p.m. on March 22 to accommodate a private rental.

Group rentals and birthday party packages for the play area are available. The Central Park complex is on the east side of Radio Drive, adjacent to the Southeast Area YMCA. Parking is available on both the east and west side of the park building. For information or reservations, call (651) 714-3586.

Protect your identity!

Get tips at workshop April 22

Learn how criminals can assume your identity and hear about the damage that can result from their activity at a community workshop on Tuesday, April 22, at 7 p.m.

Titled "How To Protect Yourself from Identity Theft," the workshop will be held at Eagle Valley Golf Course in Woodbury.

This is the fourth time the city has offered this session, which has received rave reviews from previous participants. Sponsors include the Woodbury Public Safety Board, Target Corporation, Bremer Bank, and the Woodbury Public Safety Department.

"Identity theft occurs when your personal identification information is compromised and is combined with today's technology to commit fraudulent activity," said Police Officer Chris Murray. "It is quickly becoming the crime of choice for many criminals."

At the workshop, participants will learn how they can protect themselves from identity theft. They also will learn what they can do if they should become victims of identity theft.

The workshop is free of charge, and refreshments will be provided. Those wishing to attend are asked to register in advance so

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Council Perspective *by Mayor Bill Hargis*

Take time to prepare for the unexpected

Early in February, the federal government raised the terrorist threat level to orange – indicating a higher degree for a potential terrorist attack somewhere within the United States – and the Department of Homeland Security issued tips on how citizens might protect themselves.

We don't want to get into the debate about the merits of duct tape and plastic sheeting in this column. But in the aftermath of all the media attention on disaster preparedness, we'd like to suggest that some level of family emergency planning is a good idea. Just as we advised citizens to "be prepared" for potential emergencies associated with the Y2K concerns of a few years ago, so too we would advise families to prepare for all types of emergencies today.

The greatest risk to Woodbury residents most likely involves surviving a tornado or a severe storm. This doesn't mean that some other type of disaster could never occur here. In the aftermath of the Sept. 11 tragedies, we've learned that sometimes the unthinkable can occur.

Nevertheless, there are things you can do to prepare for the unexpected and reduce the stress you may feel now and later, should any emergency situation arise. Good preparation includes having a family communications plan, assembling an emergency supply kit, and keeping yourself well-informed.

Communications planning

In creating a good family communications plan, make sure to:

- Have a designated contact person in another area of the country that the family can call or e-mail to check on each other should a disaster occur.
- Have coins or a phone card in your emergency kit (cell phones and local phone service may be affected).
- Put emergency contact information in writing and make sure all family members have a copy.

If you need to evacuate your home for any reason, having some essential supplies on hand will make you and your family more

comfortable. Prepare a disaster supplies kit in an easy-to-carry container such as a duffel bag or a piece of luggage with wheels. Include "special needs" items such as infant formula or prescription medication for any member of your household.

Essentials of an emergency supply kit are:

- Three-day supply of non-perishable food and water
- First aid kit
- Battery operated radio
- Flashlight
- Extra batteries
- Emergency contact list
- Phone card or coins for telephone calls

The Woodbury Public Safety Department is staffed to handle typical day-to-day emergencies. Should a larger-scale event occur, it may take some time to assemble adequate emergency personnel. You may be forced to decide on your own, based on available information, whether to evacuate or shelter in place.

Sometimes the need for evacuation is obvious. Homes damaged by fire or severe weather need to be evacuated. Other potential disasters may not be as obvious and you will need to tune in to radio, TV, or connect to the Internet to get the information you need.

Additional resources, providing information on evacuation or sheltering in place as well as other aspects of family emergency planning, include:

- www.ready.gov;
- www.redcross.org;
- www.dps.state.mn.us/emergmt/;
- www.dps.state.mn.us/homsec/mohshome.asp.

I urge everyone to at least talk to family members about creating an emergency plan. Taking preparatory action can reassure you and your children that you can exert a measure of control in the face of emergency events.

County opens Workforce Center in Woodbury

Are you searching for a job? Need help preparing a resume or writing a cover letter? Would you like to know how to conduct an electronic job search?

If the answer to any of these questions is "yes," then you might like to know about a new county office that recently opened in the City of Woodbury. The Washington County Service Center at 2150 Radio Drive – new home for the License Bureau and the County Assessor's office – now also houses the MN Workforce Center.

The Workforce Center is designed to help citizens prepare for and search for jobs by providing many useful, free services. In the career resource area, for instance, the center provides job search, training and career exploration. Job search workshops are offered, as well as assistance in specific need areas such as laid-off workers, veterans programs, welfare to work, and disability considerations.

The Workforce Center relocated to its new Woodbury office from the Government Center in Stillwater and opened March 10. It is operated by the Washington County Department of Community Services.

The Workforce Center hours in Woodbury are 7:30 a.m. until 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. The phone number is (651) 275-8650. Convenient parking is located near the lower level entrance on the west side of the Service Center.

There are three affiliate MN Workforce Centers located in Washington County. In addition to the new location in Woodbury, there are MN Workforce Centers in Forest Lake (651-430-4268) and Cottage Grove (651-430-4159). If in need of employment search assistance, please call one of the affiliate offices for more information or consult the Workforce Center web site at <http://www.mnworkforcecenter.org/washington-county/>

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appropriate numbers of handouts can be prepared.

For more information, or to register, call Police Officer Mary Meyer at (651) 714-3640; you may leave your name and the number that will be attending. You also can register by sending an e-mail to: mmeyer@ci.woodbury.mn.us.

Auxiliary aids for disabled persons, such as interpreter services for the hearing impaired, are available upon request. Please notify Meyer by April 4 if these services are needed.

Park Patrol recruiting new volunteers; McGorman honored for long service

Since joining Woodbury's Park Patrol in June 1993, Don McGorman has put thousands of miles on his bicycle. He's been a familiar and friendly face for local residents who frequent Ojibway, Ridgeway and Chippewa parks – McGorman's primary patrol areas.

Now, after 10 seasons of volunteer service, the "dean" of the Park Patrol is retiring from active duty in the program. To honor his long commitment, the Parks and Public Safety Departments recently presented McGorman with a plaque commemorating his many years of service. He remains an active volunteer with the city, serving as president of the Woodbury Public Safety Board.

"Don helped to develop the Park and Trail Patrol program and he inspired others to volunteer," said Sgt. Sue McMahan. "When he was patrolling, Don provided a great informational resource to help those using our parks. His leadership and dedication will be missed."

McMahon is the new Park Patrol coordinator in the Public Safety Department. She hopes to recruit some new members for the 2003 Park

Patrol season, which should help fill the gap created by McGorman's retirement.

Park Patrol duties

The primary duties of Park Patrol volunteers include: detecting and reporting of vandalism and/or maintenance problems; reporting of suspicious situations or any other problem in need of attention; and providing ordinance information for those using city parks and trails.

Park Patrol members also assist with crowd control at community events such as Woodbury Days. Volunteers wear a "Park Patrol" polo shirt and carry a two-way radio or cell phone while "on duty." Some patrol on foot and others ride bikes (helmets are required). Most volunteers patrol parks near their home, but the area covered is flexible. Park Patrol members must be at least 18 years old.

"Being in the Park Patrol is a great way to learn about the city and meet a lot of people," McGorman said. "It's a good way to get a lot of exercise too. I really enjoyed the experience."

Park Patrol volunteers receive three to four hours



Citizens will miss Don McGorman's friendly face on the trails.

of training covering basic first aid, city ordinances, use of equipment, department procedures, and bike safety. McMahan is hoping to schedule a training session in mid-April.

Those interested may pick up a Park Patrol application at the Woodbury Police Department during business hours, or you may call (651) 739-4141 and ask that an application be mailed.

If you need further information, check the City of Woodbury's web site at www.ci.woodbury.mn.us or contact Sgt. McMahan via email at smcmahon@ci.woodbury.mn.us.

High marks for city services

Most Woodbury residents give high ratings to the quality of life in the community, and the city "moved into first place in the metro area" for citizens' rankings of city services. Those are two of the conclusions coming out of the community survey conducted in late January and early February for the City of Woodbury by Decision Resources Ltd. of Minneapolis.

The survey, which closely followed the format and content of polls taken every two years since 1993, also revealed that the city's growth still is regarded as the most serious issue facing Woodbury. However, the percentage of people naming growth as their key concern has declined from 66 percent in 1997 to 48 percent this year. Other concerns cited in this year's survey include traffic (17 percent), school crowding (10 percent), and taxes (10 percent).

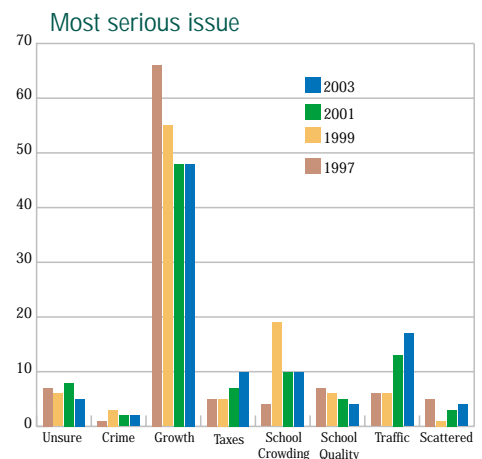
There was a significant shift in attitude regarding affordable housing in Woodbury. Thirty-eight percent said the city has enough affordable family housing; this is down from 50 percent in 2001. And only 26 percent felt there is enough affordable senior citizen housing.

Response to potential projects

In the survey, residents were polled regarding several potential projects. Some residents, for example, have expressed an interest in an outdoor swimming pool and water park, and 54 percent of those polled supported the concept. However, 41 percent said they would not be willing to see their property taxes increase even a dollar to support construction of a water park.

The survey also tested support for a community arts center and for acquisition of land to be conserved as open space in the rural areas. Forty-one percent said they would support construction of an arts center, while 52 percent oppose it, with seven percent undecided. The open space acquisition garnered more support, with 65 percent favoring purchase of major tracts of land, and survey participants indicating they would be willing to see a tax increase of \$11 per year (median amount) to cover the cost of bonds.

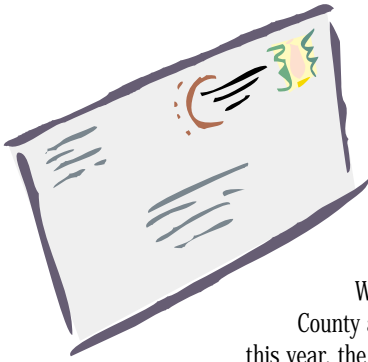
Evaluations of city services remained strong. Eighty percent ranked the value of city services as an "excellent" or "good" value for the tax dollars paid; this compares with an average of 54 percent in metro area communities similar to Woodbury.



While the overall results were very positive, the survey showed a downward trend in the ratings for city drinking water, with taste appearing to be the issue. As a result, the city will be analyzing the data by precinct in an effort to pinpoint whether the response is related to particular water wells.

For more information about the survey results, contact the Administration Department, (651) 714-3523. The full survey also will be posted on the Woodbury Web site at www.ci.woodbury.mn.us.

Market value notices should hit mailboxes in March



Property valuation notices are expected to be mailed to property owners in mid- to late March by the

Washington

County auditor. Again

this year, the valuation

notices will be mailed with property tax statements for taxes payable in 2003.

The "Notice of Valuation and Classification for Taxes Payable in 2004" will indicate the market value established this year on Jan. 2. This "market value" is the approximate amount for which a property could sell and is the basis for your 2004 taxes.

The "Statement of Property Tax Payable in 2003" will show the taxes that are payable this year along with the 2002 and 2001 market values. The property tax payable in any given year is based on the estimated market value of the property on Jan. 2 of the previous year. For example, the taxes that are payable this year (2003) are based on the market value that was established last year on Jan. 2, 2002.

Questions regarding the 2002 value should have been brought to the attention of the county assessor's staff prior to the 2002 Local Board of Appeal and Equalization last April. The county assessor's office cannot make adjustments to the 2002 market value at this time. The property tax payable is calculated by Washington County and

questions regarding the tax should be directed to the auditor's office at (651) 430-6175.

Determining market value

Each year, the county assessor's office reviews the assessed market value of all property to determine whether changes in the local real estate market require a change in assessed values. Real estate sales are verified and studied based on the location, age, and style of home and quality of construction to determine these market adjustments.

What should you do if you question the 2003 estimated market value listed on your "Notice of Valuation" form?

- 1) **Research:** Check the local real estate ads or agencies for information on listings and sales that have taken place in your area.
- 2) **Contact the Assessor's Office:** Property owners who have questions or concerns regarding the market value set for their property are encouraged to contact the assessor's office and speak with the appraiser assigned to their area. The appraiser will review the property data and sales information with you and, if necessary, schedule an interior review of the property. A large majority of concerns can be resolved through this administrative review without the need for a formal appeal. In order to give staff adequate time to address each concern, property owners are asked to contact the assessor's office as soon as possible after receiving their valuation notice in the mail.

- 3) **Attend the Local Board of Appeal and Equalization:** If, after the appraiser's review, you still feel the estimated market value of your property is too high, you can make an appointment to attend the Local Board of Appeal and Equalization. This meeting is scheduled for 7 p.m. April 24 and takes place in the Council Chambers at Woodbury City Hall. Appointments are made through your appraiser and can be done over the phone or by letter. It is not necessary to attend this meeting if you have already notified staff of your desire to continue your appeal. Those property owners in attendance will be given the opportunity to present specific evidence to indicate why they feel that the appraiser's estimated market value is incorrect.

There are further methods of appeal including the opportunity to appear at the June meeting of the Washington County Board of Appeal and Equalization. You must have appealed to the Local Board of Appeal and Equalization in order to appear before the county board. It is important to know that the local and the county boards have the authority to raise or lower an appealed market value.

The final avenue of appeal is a petition to the State Tax Court; this does not require any earlier appeal. If you have any questions regarding the appraisal process or the 2003 market value, contact the Woodbury Branch of the Washington County Assessor's Office at (651) 275-8635.

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Mayor: William Hargis. Council Members: Mike Charron, Cheryl Hurst, Michael Madigan, Peter Rekow. City Administrator: Barry Johnson. Communications Coordinator: Julie Lehr.

The City of Woodbury is subject to Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. In accordance with the act, the Woodbury newsletter is available in other formats. Call Julie Lehr, 714-3500; TDD: 714-3568.

Postal Patron
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