

# NEW MARK COMMONS

AN URBAN FOREST

# New Mark Commons An Urban Forest



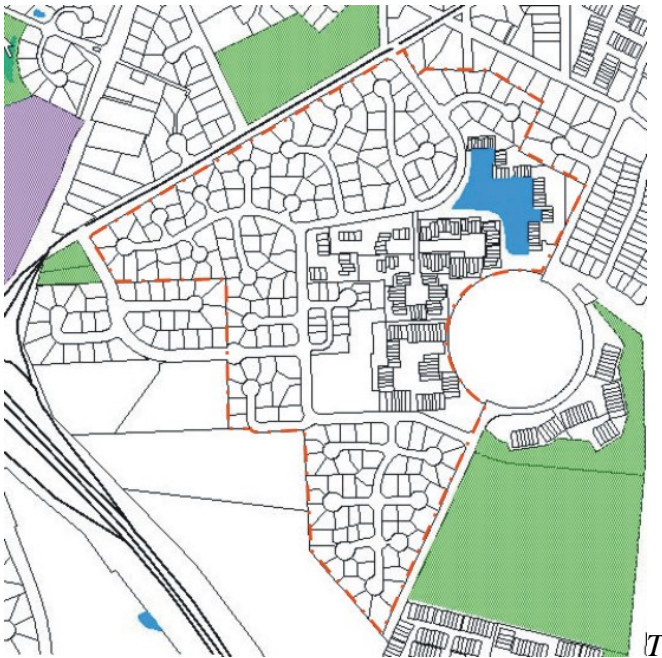
*New Mark Forest*

A document prepared by the  
New Mark Commons Homeowners Association  
to provide information  
on the planning and management  
of forested areas  
in the New Mark Commons community  
December 2008

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# Introduction



*The New Mark Commons Development*

New Mark Commons, incorporated in 1967, is a development of 198 townhouses and 186 single family houses in Rockville, MD. on 96 acres between Rte. 270 to the west and Maryland Avenue to the north, the development was designed as a Planned Residential Unit (PRU), a permitting option that allowed clustering of townhouses in return for public open space.

The preservation of wooded areas and of individual forest trees was a top priority of the developer, Edmund J. Bennett, and the planning and design firm, Keyes, Lethbridge and Condon. Existing forest and topography were surveyed and roads and houses were sited to maximize preservation of mature trees and minimize disturbance to natural slopes and watercourses. Generous forest buffers were preserved around runoff swales and pathways and new trees were planted. From the start New Mark Commons was a forested community; many of the trees are older than the houses.

The urban forest illustration above right shows the extent of the New Mark forest by processing an aerial photograph to emphasize mature trees.



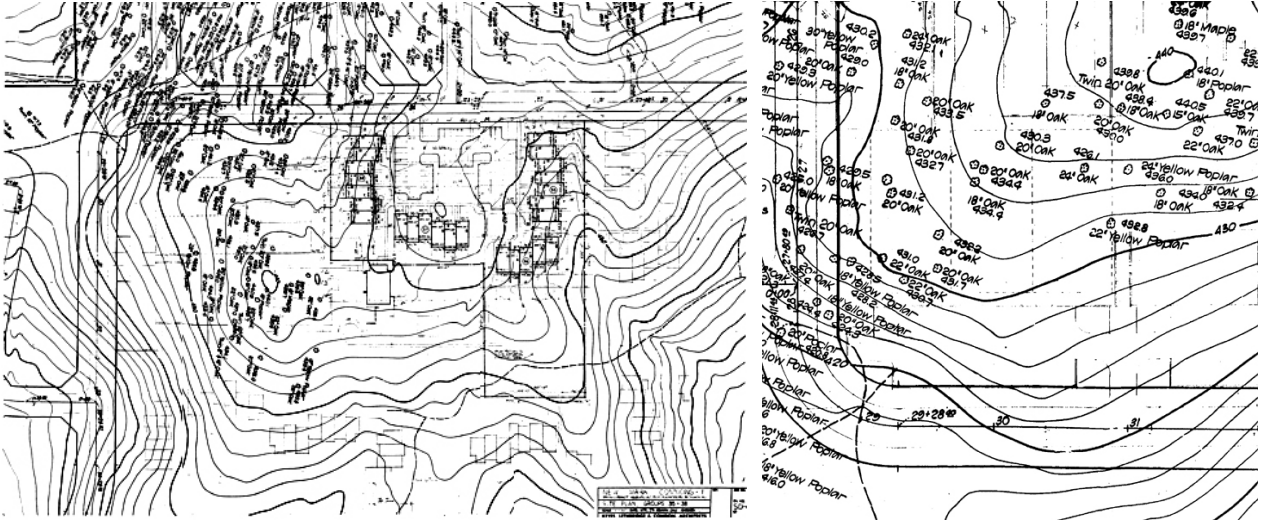
*The New Mark Urban Forest*

Bennett also put in place mechanisms to protect and manage this urban forest. The Declaration of Covenant contains a provision prohibiting the removal of living trees. Over the years, the Board of Directors has established a revenue source from homeowner association (HOA) fees for urban forest management; a board to make policy on forest plans, procedures and budgets; an administrator to execute them; Landscape and Tree Committees; a pool of contract and volunteer experts to advise; and an engaged population of volunteers who turn out to help.

A home in a forest sets New Mark Commons apart from other developments. The trees add beauty, provide privacy, attract birds, and bring shade in the summer (it is typically ten degrees cooler in the Commons than on the Rockville Pike). Trees also absorb carbon dioxide and other pollutants, release oxygen, fix carbon, improve air quality and reduce global warming. New Mark Commons is an example of what is possible in an urban forest.

This document details how we manage our forest and illustrates how fine it looks. We hope that it can provide an example for other communities working to promote urban forestry.

## Planning and Design



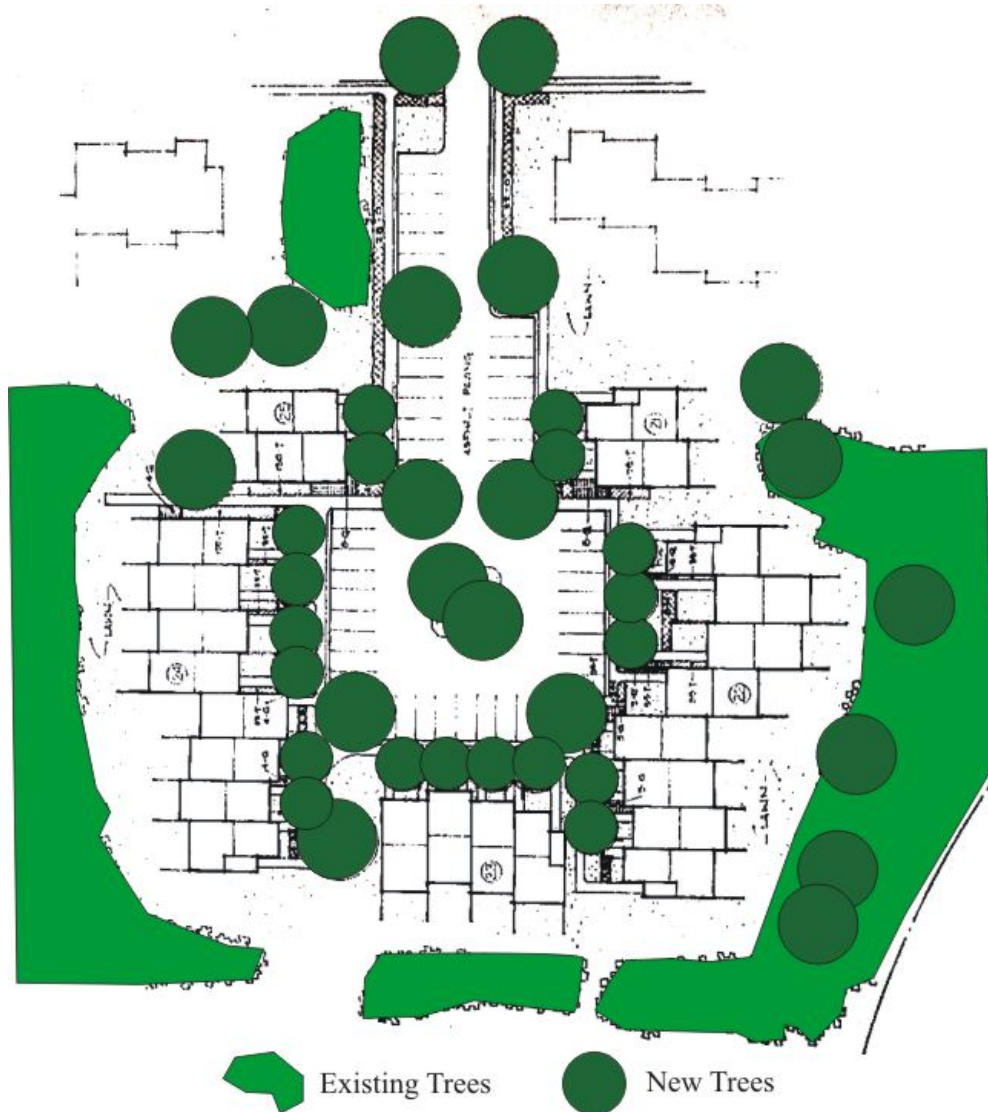
*The first stage of New Mark Commons design was a survey of existing trees*

The first thing that developer Bennett, and the planning and design firm, Keyes, Lethbridge and Condon did in New Mark Commons was to survey mature trees and the topography. Not only did they wish to preserve as many trees as

possible but also to alter slope as little as possible to preserve natural surface and ground water flow and avoid damaging tree roots. Roads and houses were placed carefully to maximize tree preservation.



*Roads and houses were carefully placed to preserve mature trees*



*New forest planting in housing areas enhanced the existing forest, this shows a sample of one townhome court, 276 to 316 New Mark Esplanade.*

In areas where land was cleared for houses, streets and parking, there was generous new planting mostly of native forest trees with decorative flowering trees in the parking areas to provide shade for parked cars.

PLANT LIST & KEY		
	BOTANICAL NAME	COMMON NAME
A	QUERCUS PALUSTRIS	PIN OAK
B	QUERCUS BOREALIS	RED OAK
C	QUERCUS PHELLOS	WILLOW OAK
D	ACER SACCHARUM	SUGAR MAPLE
E	ACER RUBRUM	RED MAPLE
F	PINUS STROBUS	EAST. WHITE PINE
G	PINUS NIGRA	AUSTRIAN PINE
H	CORNUS FLORIDA	FLW. DOGWOOD

## Tree Protection Covenant and Oversight

Having designed and built a forested community Bennett established many procedures that would ensure that the forest would be preserved and maintained in the future. An HOA was established with a board of seven members elected by the community. A covenant was designed which all new homebuyers sign which, among other things, restricts tree removal.

Section X (3) (i) of the Declaration of New Mark Covenants and Restrictions states that:

*No sound hardwood trees shall be removed from any lot without written approval of the Association acting through its Board of Directors or duly appointed committee.*

A section of the community's Architectural Control Guidelines provides general information concerning the removal and replacement of trees and shrubs:

*Ornamental and evergreen trees will be subject to the same restriction on removal. The Board has assigned responsibility in this area to the Landscaping and Grounds committee. Authorization for removal generally will not be granted unless there is physical intrusion by the tree's trunk, limbs, branches or roots on a living unit which could cause damage to property or blockage of paths and sight lines from vehicles and pruning will not solve the problem.*

The Landscaping and Grounds Committee split later into the Tree Committee and the Landscape Committee. The Tree Committee was given the responsibility to monitor tree removal applications.

### ***New Mark Commons Tree Committee Statement of Purpose***

*Trees are an integral part of the quality of life in New Mark Commons. Their natural beauty enhances our landscape, and their presence encourages beneficial wildlife and contribute to keeping our neighborhood cooler in the hot summer months (as well as our residences cooler in summer and warmer in winter), and improves both soil and water quality.*

*The New Mark Commons Homes Association Covenants state that a resident may not remove a healthy hardwood tree without the permission of the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors has established the Tree Committee to review requests for removing trees and to work with residents to maintain the existing trees in our community.*

*Members of the Tree Committee will review applications for the removal of trees with the following principles in mind:*

- *Safety of residents and safeguarding of property are the first consideration.*
- *Addressing an issue by pruning, trimming or other maintenance is preferable to removing a tree.*
- *Whenever possible, a tree should be replaced with a healthy tree of the same or similar species, or a tree that is native to this area.*



NEW MARK COMMONS  
 HOMES ASSOCIATION, INC.  
 P.O. BOX 4206  
 ROCKVILLE, MD 20850  
 (301) 340-0288

DATE RECEIVED: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPLICATION FOR TREE MODIFICATION**

***MUST BE SUBMITTED FOR TREE REMOVAL ON PRIVATE PROPERTY or REPLACEMENT, ADDITION OR REMOVAL ON COMMON PROPERTY***

**NEW MARK COMMONS TREE POLICY**

Trees are an integral part of the quality of life in New Mark Commons. It is the intent of the Board of Directors to promote trees by supporting their maintenance and replacement.

Article X, Section (3)(i) of the covenants of the New Mark Commons Homes Association states, "No sound hardwood trees shall be removed from any lot without written approval of the Association acting through its Board of Directors or duly appointed committee."

The New Mark Commons Architectural Control Guidelines provide the same protection for softwood and ornamental trees. (See ACC Guidelines, Page 12)

A committee of community residents will review each application. Approval for tree removal will be based on the health of the tree or potential hazard to residents and property.

Resident: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Part A – Complete for applications to remove trees on PRIVATE PROPERTY**

Describe the location, species and condition of the tree you wish to remove. Include a convenient time for members of the committee to inspect it.

Explain the reason(s) you wish to remove the tree. If you believe the tree is a hazard, please describe the nature of the hazard and any steps you have taken to reduce it.

Please provide any other information that may be helpful. If you have sought the advice of a certified arborist, please attach the recommendations made.

**Part B –Complete to plant or remove trees on COMMON PROPERTY.**

Tree Removal and Replacement

Describe the location, species and condition of the tree you wish to have removed, and provide the reason(s) you believe it should be removed.

The Association's policy is that a tree on common property be replaced with the same or similar species of tree. If you are requesting that a tree be removed and replaced with a different species, please describe.

Tree Planting

*Please note that the Association, through the Landscape Committee, surveys common areas and recommends new trees and shrubs for the Association to plant in these areas. Input from residents is greatly appreciated.*

*This application is intended for use when you as a homeowner want to plant a specific tree(s) on common property next to your property or in a circle on your street. All other requests or suggestions should be made to the Landscape Committee.*

Describe the location, species and size of tree you wish to plant.

Describe your plan to care for the new tree in the first two years after planting. This is important if you want a tree to be planted in an area where a source of water is not readily available.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Applicant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Submitted

The Tree Committee will review and respond to all applications within 30 days of receipt. In most cases where removal of a tree is requested, members of the Board or duly appointed committee will contact the homeowner to schedule an inspection of the tree. Review may include soliciting input from neighboring property owners.

# HOA Forest Management

## Forest Management Goals

The New Mark Commons HOA has an active role in planning and maintaining the New Mark forest. The goals are to preserve, protect and enhance the trees of New Mark by removing and replacing dead trees, pruning deadwood, pruning tree limbs that are a threat to life or property, removing invasive species that threaten the forest, watering young trees during drought and preparing and implementing plans for new tree planting.

## Staff, Contractors and Volunteers

The HOA has a part-time administrator, Jim Denny, who is responsible for all the maintenance activities of the community, including forest management. Jim has lived and worked in New Mark for many years and has extensive skills and experience in grounds management.

The HOA contracts with Bonifant Tree Service Inc. for tree maintenance services and professional advice on forest management. Bonifant has extensive experience with urban forest management and several qualified arborists on staff.

The HOA has an annual landscape maintenance contract with Stolburg Landscaping LLC which includes tree planting, grass cutting, trimming, edging, fertilizing and leaf collection for the common areas of the community.

New Mark Commons has several residents with landscape knowledge who offer their expertise to the New Mark community, notably Stewart McKenzie, an environmental planner and landscape architect, and Linda Huntington, Chair of the Tree Committee. They have been active in preparing forest restoration plans and coordinating contract and volunteer tree planting.

## Landscape Committee

The HOA established a Landscape Committee to discuss general landscaping issues, advise the board, and make proposals for tree planting and maintenance.

## Budget

The HOA collects homeowner dues as a source of revenue to maintain the community spaces. The following summarizes recent and proposed tree-related budgets and expenditures:

- 2009** - \$24,000 budgeted for tree maintenance
- 2008** - \$24,000 budgeted for tree maintenance, removal and replacement. - \$23,713 spent, which included \$7,586 for tree planting.
- 2007** - \$19,000 budgeted for tree maintenance - \$26,136 spent.
- 2006** - \$17,000 budgeted for tree maintenance - \$14,030 spent.
- 2005** - \$16,175 budgeted for tree maintenance - \$16,905 spent.

More information about spending for tree planting and maintenance can be found in the proposed 2009 budget and the sample invoices from landscape and tree service companies included in Appendix A.

## Forest Management

The HOA tree management is a combination of proactive maintenance, requests from residents and emergency situations. The HOA Administrator looks for trees that are dead, need pruning, have hanging branches and broken limbs and compiles a list for the tree service.

During the 1st quarter, he meets with Jamie Smith from Bonifant Tree Service to evaluate and prioritize the work that needs to be done. He presents the Bonifant proposal to the Board for their approval. On occasion, he solicits proposals from additional tree companies.

Once planting and maintenance is complete the administrator evaluates the work, waters new trees if necessary and monitors survival.

## Plans and Projects

The HOA's forest management is not only maintenance. From time to time new tree planting plans are proposed.

### New Mark Commons Lake Redesign



This project proposed a redesign of the lake to coincide with dredging. The plan included planting new willows and establishing a marsh fringe around parts of the lake. The willows have been planted but the community preferred to keep open water on the lake.

### New Mark Commons Memorial Garden

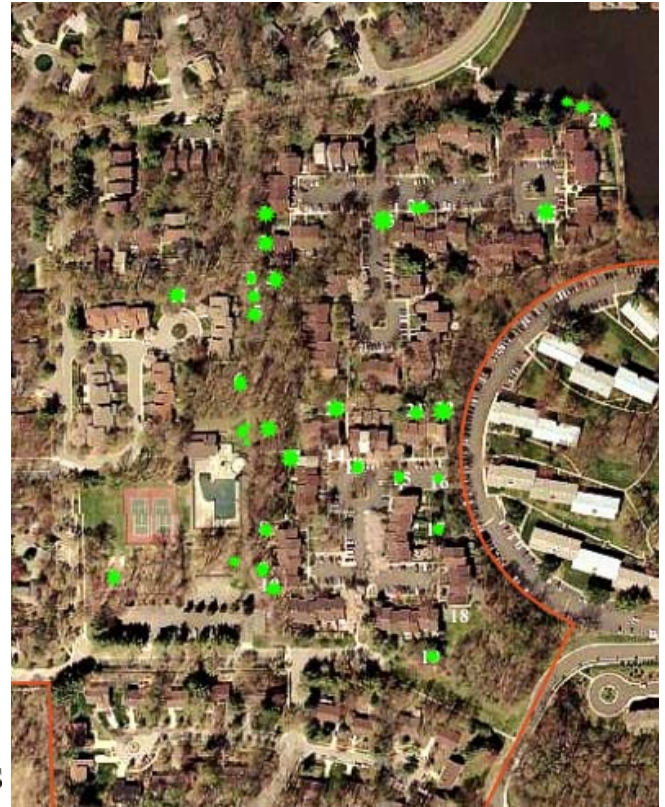
ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN ASSOCIATES

New Mark Memorial Garden



This plan proposed planting a memorial garden near the clubhouse where residents could plant trees to remember relatives and friends who had died. The planting is taking place in stages as residents donate trees.

### New Mark Commons Forest Restoration



Sketch Design 3

This plan recognized that New Mark Commons was losing mature forest trees to age, disease, wind and lightning without replacing them. This was leading to a gradual decline of the forest inherited from the original design.

The Landscape and Tree Committees proposed to the board a new planting of semi-mature native forest trees in the positions shown in the photo above and the board approved the project

In the fall of 2008 Stolburg Landscaping planted 46 trees in the community at a cost of \$7,318. The invoice for this work is included as Appendix B.



*Stolburg employees plant trees in fall 2008*

## Volunteer Events

New Mark Commons has a strong sense of community, and residents volunteer for a number of activities. Some of these contribute to the maintenance and restoration of the urban forest.

## Garden Club Meetings

The New Mark Commons Garden Club is a group of volunteers that meets regularly. Traditionally their focus has been on flowers and decorative shrubs, and they have been active in planting and maintaining garden areas around the entrance to the community, the pool and the clubhouse. Recently, the club has become interested in the forest canopy and in October 2008 arranged a walk through the community to learn to identify trees. The flier below was prepared for this walk.

## The Trees of New Mark Commons Canopy Trees



Red Oak  
*Quercus rubra*



White Oak  
*Quercus alba*



Pin Oak  
*Quercus palustris*



Willow Oak  
*Quercus phellos*



Black Oak  
*Quercus velutina*



Sugar Maple  
*Acer saccharum*



Red Maple  
*Acer rubrum*



Silver Maple  
*Acer saccharinum*



Norway Maple  
*Acer platanoides*



Tulip Poplar  
*Liriodendron tulipifera*



Sycamore (Plane)  
*Platanus occidentalis*



Sweetgum  
*Liquidambar styraciflua*



Weeping Willow  
*Salix babylonica*



Sassafras  
*Sassafras albidum*



Honey Locust  
*Gleditsia triacanthos*



Black Walnut  
*Juglans nigra*



Shagbark Hickory  
*Carya ovata*



Ginkgo  
*Ginkgo biloba*



White Pine  
*Pinus strobus*



Hemlock  
*Tsuga canadensis*

## Planting and Cleanup Days

Each spring the New Mark Commons HOA arranges a volunteer cleanup day. Residents come and clear fallen branches in forest areas, pull ivy from trees and cut back other invasive species. In the fall of 2008, November 1 was designated as a tree planting day as part of the forest restoration project proposed by the Landscape and Tree Committees.

The HOA obtained a grant from the Maryland Urban and Community Forest Committee and used it to buy native tree saplings from the Maryland Tree-Mendous program. The grant was conditioned on the community finding volunteers, and the HOA put out a call for diggers



### FOR A NEW MARK COMMONS PROJECT

This fall the New Mark Commons Board of Directors is planning a major planting of forest canopy and understory trees on common land throughout the community. These new plantings will replace trees that have died and restore our forest. As part of this reforestation project, we are obtaining about 40 tree saplings from [TreeMendous MD](http://www.treemendous.com), a state program that provides trees to communities at reduced prices. It is quite likely that we will get a grant to cover the cost of the trees.

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

**We need you and your family** to volunteer for this community event. Please sign up below for a September or October planting day. Come out and plant "your" tree(s). To celebrate our efforts, there will be a diggers' BBQ after the planting. Sign up below, and we will e-mail you more details as they are known.

About 20 people responded, an e-mail list was created and used to keep the volunteer group informed of arrangements.



## New Mark Diggers

Saturday, November 1, 9 am

Raindate

Sunday, November 2, 9 am

Meet at the clubhouse for coffee and doughnuts then plant 50 trees and shrubs around New Mark Commons. Wear old clothes and sturdy shoes.

Please join us



The planting was a success. About 30 residents showed up, many of them children, and 53 native forest saplings were planted.



*New Mark Diggers in action*

The article on the following page recording this event was published in the *New Mark News*.



## The New Mark Diggers

There is a saying that those who plant trees plant for their grandchildren. On Saturday, November 1<sup>st</sup> the grandchildren of New Mark Commons got a treat, volunteer residents came to the New Mark clubhouse on a fine autumn day to plant trees around the community.



The Homeowners Association had obtained a grant from the Maryland Urban and Community Forest Committee to buy trees from the Maryland TreeMendous program. With this grant we bought fifty three native forest trees, oaks and maples, tulip poplars, dogwoods and hollies, and we put out a call for volunteers to put them in the ground. The Urban Forest Council of Washington DC generously loaned us the picks and shovels needed for planting, and at nine in the morning we waited a little nervously to see who would show up. The New Mark community responded magnificently. About thirty residents, from grandparents to grandchildren came ready for the heavy work of digging through hard ground and tree roots to dig the holes for the trees. By noon they were all planted.



Thanks to all the diggers, special thanks to Linda Huntington who found the grant, Stewart McKenzie who coordinated the planting, Jim Denny who helped at every step of the way and continues to make sure the new trees have enough water, and Sally Guardia who took the photographs. The littlest diggers may see these saplings grow tall enough to climb.

# Appendix A Sample New Mark Commons Budget

November/December 2008

New Mark News

## 2009 PROPOSED BUDGET—EXPENDITURES 2.75% INCREASE

	BUDGET	2008 YEAR-END	PROJECTED BUDGET	2009 NOTE
<b>ADMINISTRATIVE</b>				
TAXES - CORP/UNEMPL/PROP	2,000	1,279	1,500	2
INSURANCE	25,000	27,162	27,000	
UTILITIES/PHONE & ELEC	7,008	6,606	7,267	
ADMIN EXPENSES	4,300	3,546	4,000	
PRINTING & DELIVERY	4,300	3,815	4,650	
PROF. SVCS/LEGAL & ACCT	11,000	8,967	9,000	
ENTERTAINMENT	4,550	5,137	7,000	3
COMPUTER	2,000	2,000	2,000	
WRITE-OFF FOR BAD DEBT	—	<u>1,463</u>		
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>104,263</b>	<b>104,278</b>	<b>104,621</b>	
<b>CLUBHOUSE &amp; TENNIS</b>				
UTILITIES - PHONE/GAS/ELEC	12,502	13,082	14,554	
CH SERVICES - PEST/ALARM	3,600	2,600	3,150	
CH SUPPLIES	1,400	405	900	
TENNIS	<u>1,000</u>		<u>600</u>	
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>18,502</b>	<b>16,087</b>	<b>19,204</b>	
<b>POOL</b>				
POOL MANAGEMENT	50,211	50,211	54,516	4
FEES/LICENSES	1,000	1,095	1,200	
WATER	1,400	1,730	2,000	
POOL SUPPLIES	5,000	6,399	5,000	
POOL REPAIRS	<u>5,000</u>	<u>10,582</u>	<u>5,500</u>	
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>62,611</b>	<b>70,017</b>	<b>68,216</b>	
<b>LAKE</b>				
ELECTRICITY-LAKE	4,145	4,078	4,485	
FISH/CHEMICALS	6,000	3,929	6,000	5
LAKE/FOUNTAIN REPAIRS	<u>750</u>	<u>772</u>	<u>750</u>	
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>10,895</b>	<b>8,779</b>	<b>11,235</b>	

*continued from previous page*

	<b>BUDGET</b>	<b>2008 YEAR-END</b>	<b>PROJECTED BUDGET</b>	<b>2009 NOTE</b>
<b>MAINTENANCE</b>				
LAWN CONTRACT	41,079	41,079	41,901	6
CONTRACTED MAINTENANCE	3,000	2,203	2,500	
MAINTENANCE EXPENSES	1,800	1,682	2,000	
SNOW REMOVAL	12,000	12,000	12,000	7
TREE REMOVAL & REPLACE	24,000	23,713	24,000	8
LIGHTING MAINTENANCE	4,000	130	4,000	9
VANDALISM				
LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE	7,500	4,204	7,900	
LANDSCAPE PROJECTS	<u>7,500</u>	<u>9,440</u>	<u>7,900</u>	
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>100,879</b>	<b>94,451</b>	<b>102,201</b>	
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>297,150</b>	<b>293,612</b>	<b>305,477</b>	

# Appendix B Sample Stolburg Landscaping Invoice

2



Stolburg Landscaping, LLC.  
7800 Airpark Road, Unit #12  
Gaithersburg, MD. 20879

## Estimate

Date	Estimate #
9/3/2008	1105

Name / Address
New Mark Commons Homes Assoc. P.O. Box 4206 Rockville, MD. 20850

Description	Total
We hereby submit specifications and estimates for landscaping enhancements as follows: We propose to furnish the materials and perform the labor necessary for completion.	
Install (2) Red Oak, (6) White Oak, (3) Pin Oak, (1) Willow Oak, (1) Red Maple, (3) Weeping Willow, (1) Sugar Maple, (10) Tulip Poplar, (9) Holly and (6) White Redbud at various locations throughout property. All trees will be 1 1/2 - 2 " caliper, ball and burlap, soil conditioner will be added and trees will be wired and staked. (Cost of each tree is approximately \$174.00)	7,318.00

**Payment schedule:**  
1/3 due upon acceptance, balance due upon completion.  
Price is valid 30 days from proposal date.

<b>Total</b>	<b>\$7,318.00</b>
--------------	-------------------

All material is guaranteed to be as specified. All work to be completed in a workmanlike manner according to standard practices. Any alteration or deviation from above specification, involving extra costs will be executed only upon written orders, and will become an extra charge over and above the estimate.

Signature of Acceptance:

Joanna H. Deery

9-8-08

faxed to Matt. 9-10-08  
also mailed

# Appendix C Sample Bonifant Tree Service Invoice

## Bonifant Tree Service, Inc.

16300 Oak Hill Rd. Silver Spring, MD 20905  
(301) 942-7890 • (202) 362-7890  
Fax: (301) 476-9498

### Proposal Submitted to:

June 3, 2008

Mr. Jim Denny  
New Mark Commons Homeowners Assoc.  
P.O. Box 4206  
Rockville, MD 20850

Phone: h (301) 340-0288  
w  
c

### We hereby submit specifications and estimates for:

- |   |            |
|---|------------|
| 1. Area around Clubhouse - remove leaning Pine tree and Cherry tree over the driveway.  | \$600.00   |
| 2. Three Maple trees and three Poplar trees on west side of Clubhouse - remove deadwood 2" and larger, cut back from pool house hard, and open up area. | \$900.00   |
| 3. Poplar hanging over lawn on north side of Clubhouse - raise branch level and cut back over lawn.   | \$175.00   |
| 4. Triple stand of Maples and small Poplar on right side of driveway - elevate to 15'.  | \$90.00    |
| 5. Two Poplars on either side of White Pines to right of driveway - elevate to 30'.   | \$175.00   |
| 6. Hollow trunk Poplar on right side of driveway - remove tree, cut stump close.  | \$500.00   |
| 7. Four dying Pines at west end of Clubhouse parking lot - remove trees, cut stumps close.  | \$1,500.00 |
| 8. Treat thirty remaining Pines along parking lot for pine bark beetle.   | \$350.00   |
| 9. Maple tree in front of 878 NME - thin canopy and remove deadwood 2" and larger and install two cables.   | \$1,150.00 |
| 10. 500 and 506 NME - elevate Pines over new street trees.  | \$50.00    |
| 11. 24 Welwyn Way - remove two front Locust trees with decay. Remove hanger in Cherry tree over driveway and low deadwood.                              | \$1,575.00 |
| 12. 274 NME - Elevate rear Pine by removing two low whorls of branches and also remove rubbing branch.  | \$175.00   |
| Right side Red Oak - elevate over road and grass.   | \$90.00    |
| 13. 286 NME - remove 6" dead low branch from rear Oak that is heading toward house.   | \$90.00    |

Subtotal: **\$7,420.00**

