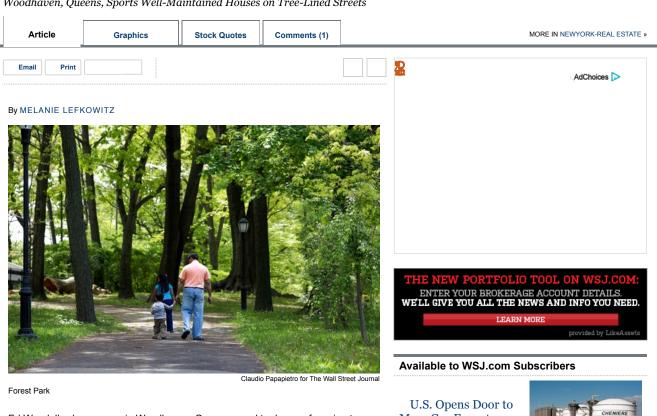


Woodhaven, Queens, Sports Well-Maintained Houses on Tree-Lined Streets



Ed Wendell, who grew up in Woodhaven, Queens, used to dream of moving to a small town upstate where he and his wife would know all their neighbors.

Then he became involved in local organizations and met store owners and fellow residents of Woodhaven. He got to know the neighborhood's local traditions, such as the annual Christmas tree-lighting ceremony on Jamaica Avenue, and the American Legion Post 118's practice on Memorial Day of erecting a garden of crosses to honor deceased local veterans.

> "These traditions that have been around for a long time, once we became more aware of that, suddenly when we went out shopping and going places, we knew people and were talking with them," says Mr. Wendell,

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A poster in Neir's Tavern of ex-Woodhaven resident Mae West

now the president of the Woodhaven Residents' Block Association, as well as of the local historical society. "It turned out we were living in the small town we were looking for—we'd been there all along."

Woodhaven, in southwest Queens, with nearly 40,000 residents, enjoys rich diversity, well-maintained houses on tree-lined streets and access to the vast expanse of Forest Park, which runs along the neighborhood's northern boundary on Park Lane South. Jamaica Avenue is a vibrant commercial strip with a mix of decades-old family-owned shops and newer chain and discount stores.

The neighborhood is situated about 15 miles from Manhattan, and roughly between the neighborhoods of Cypress

Hills in Brooklyn and Richmond Hill and Ozone Park on the eastern side. The elevated J and Z trains rumble along Jamaica Avenue, and the A train and Jackie Robinson Parkway pass nearby. Long Island Rail Road stations can be found in Kew Gardens, Forest Hills or Jamaica.

Woodhaven was once populated largely by European immigrants, some of whom came to the area to work at the former Lalance & Grosjean tinware factory during the 19th century. Today, those of European descent have been joined by increasing numbers of Hispanics and Asians.

"It's a mixed community," says Mary Ann Carey, district manager of Community Board 9. "A lot of the old-timers are still there...and you have new immigrants coming in."

As in other Queens neighborhoods, overcrowding has been an issue in recent years, Mr. Wendell says, with illegal conversions of houses and apartments straining local services such as sanitation. Parking is challenging in some areas.



Manor Delicatessen on Jamaica Avenue in Woodhaven

Woodhaven residents prize the area's many trees, not only in the adjacent Forest Park but shading its residential streets, Ms. Carey says. Former residents include the performer Mae West, and Betty Smith, the author of "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn."

Alongside its trees, Woodhaven has a large stock of single- and two-family homes, many of them detached Victorians and Colonials.

Last year, the city rezoned Woodhaven and Richmond Hill to protect the character of these houses, and to direct new development to the neighborhoods' commercial strips.

Prices for houses are relatively affordable, brokers say, ranging roughly between \$300,000 and \$600,000. There are a small number of cooperatives, including the Forest Park complex near the park, where one-bedroom apartments start around \$100,000 and three bedrooms may cost between \$230,000 and \$300,000, says

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Michael Tirelli, of Kaye Realty & Development Inc.



The median listing price for houses in Woodhaven in March was \$375,900, Zillow.com Z+1.06% says, a 2% increase over the same period last year.

"I used to tell people all the time that Woodhaven was the last affordable place to buy a house," Mr. Tirelli says. "It's a great place to grow up and a great place to have kids."

Parks: The 545-acre Forest Park includes a 100-year-old carousel, a

bandshell where outdoor concerts are held, a golf course, tennis courts, walking trails and playgrounds.

Schools: Woodhaven is part of District 27, and local schools include P.S. 60, an elementary school with 1,175 students, and P.S. 97, with 700 students, both of which received an A rating from the city for the 2011-12 school year.



Local private schools include the St. Thomas the Apostle, a Roman Catholic school with students in prekindergarten through eighth grade.

Dining: Restaurants along Jamaica Avenue include the Avenue Diner and New Pops Restaurant, also a diner; Mama Meena's Family Restaurant,

serving Filipino food; and Sal's Pizzeria.

Shopping: Schmidt's Candy, a confectionery, opened on Jamaica Avenue in 1925, and the Manor Delicatessen, serving sandwiches and prepared foods, has been open for more than 75 years. Large national stores can be found a short distance away at the Gateway Center in East New York

Entertainment: Neir's Tavern, on 78th Street, whose website says it has been in near-continuous operation for 180 years, was featured in the movie "Goodfellas." Today it serves steak and pub food, with live music performances several times a week.

A version of this article appeared May 17, 2013, on page A20 in the U.S. edition of The Wall Street Journal, with the headline: More and More Find Haven in Woodhaven.





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