

Proudly presented by the residents of the Armstrong Park neighborhood:

The Armstrong Park Neighborhood Plan



Armstrong Park Neighborhood Plan Overview

Over the years, the City of Plano has come to recognize a need for individualized attention in Plano's more established neighborhoods. The Neighborhood Planning program is designed to provide a strategy of cooperative problem solving and mutual responsibility in order to avoid the deterioration of property values and quality of life that many other urban areas now face. By addressing issues identified in the neighborhood planning process proactively, before they become problems, we can avoid the social and economic impacts of "rebuilding" a neighborhood while greatly improving the quality of life for the residents of Plano.

The Armstrong Park area was chosen to participate in the Neighborhood Planning program because of the unique challenges facing the area and a demonstrated interest by the residents to improve their neighborhood. Aging properties, absentee ownership, and a need for strong code enforcement efforts characterize the neighborhood. The Armstrong Park neighborhood is also experiencing an unusually high property turnover rate as a new generation of property owners buy their first homes in the well-established residential areas of Armstrong Park. This influx of new neighbors creates a need for neighborhood unity and a common vision for the community that the neighbors, new and old, can easily recognize and support.

By creating a forum for citizen involvement in addressing the neighborhood's issues through the Neighborhood Planning program, we enable creative problem solving and a spirit of teamwork between the City and the neighborhood. That partnership will serve as a model for other neighborhoods throughout Plano as they begin to face the challenges associated with aging neighborhoods.

City staff worked with a Neighborhood Planning Team, composed of more than fifteen residents from the Armstrong Park neighborhood. An invitation went out to all homeowners, renters, business owners, and their employees to assist in the preparation of the neighborhood plan. The Planning Team dealt with the following topics: Public Facilities and Services, Demographics, Social Analysis, Utilities and Infrastructure, Transportation and Circulation, Safety, History, Economic Development, Marketing, Land Use, Urban Design, and Housing.

The mission of the Neighborhood Planning Team was to review the existing conditions and needs of the Armstrong Park neighborhood and work to develop a neighborhood plan. The Neighborhood Planning Team used a survey to develop an inventory of the community assets and needs. Surveys were mailed to all residential and commercial water customers and property owners in the Armstrong Park neighborhood. Surveys were then collected by neighborhood volunteers and tallied by City staff. Results of the survey, coupled with results of an exercise identifying neighborhood strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, provided a good inventory of conditions and needs in the neighborhood. Based on this information, the neighborhood plan was developed.

The plan addresses the need to protect the assets of the neighborhood and recommends ways to meet these needs through long-term goals. Each goal is further defined in the neighborhood plan by recommended action items.

The 6 major goals of the Armstrong Park Neighborhood Plan:

1. To preserve the quality of life offered to neighborhood residents and to promote a sense of pride in the community.
2. To preserve property values by improving property maintenance and upkeep and the level of code compliance in the neighborhood through educational efforts, personal efforts on the part of the residents, and collaboration with the City Property Standards Department.
3. To preserve the trees in the neighborhood as one of the resources that contribute to the overall character of the neighborhood.
4. To improve the appearance and conditions in Willow Creek Park.
5. To increase safety in the neighborhood.
6. To ensure that traffic in the neighborhood is both safe and efficient while not negatively impacting the quality of life for neighborhood residents.

The objectives and action items associated with each goal provide a framework for future decisions affecting the neighborhood. It is recognized that many of the recommended action items contained in the plan are conceptual only and may need to be analyzed in greater detail, both individually and in relationship to other recommended action items.

Implementation of the plan will ultimately rest with the Neighborhood Planning Team, who may independently pursue any item determined to be outside the scope of City services.

Introduction to Armstrong Park

The Armstrong Park Neighborhood is located approximately one half mile northeast of Plano's Historic Downtown, near the intersection of Park Blvd. and K Ave. The neighborhood is bounded on the north by Park Blvd. and on the east by Jupiter Rd., on the south by 19th St. and Overglen Dr., and on the west by K Ave.

Land Use

The predominant zoning in the neighborhood is Single Family (Single Family-7). The majority of the homes in the neighborhood were constructed in the 1960's and 1970's.

Two shopping centers are located west of the residential areas at the intersection of Park Blvd. and K Ave and a third complex, Panther Park, is located at the intersection of Park Blvd. and Jupiter Rd. There is an apartment complex adjacent to the neighborhood on Park Blvd and there are six duplexes located on 19th Street.

Development

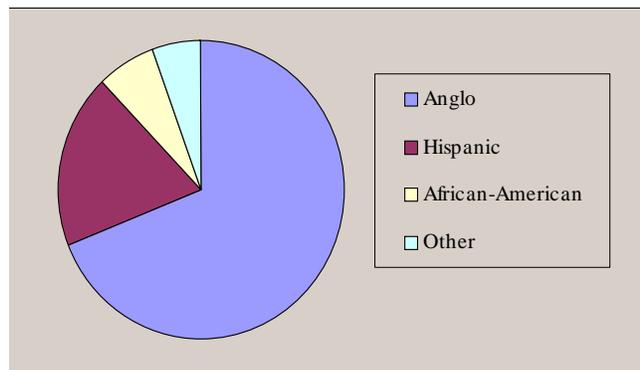
Within the neighborhood, two opportunities for new development exist. Both tracts of developable land are located along K Ave. on the western boundary of the neighborhood. One tract is approximately .14 acres and is located near the intersection of K Ave and 19th St. just south of the First International Bank. The second developable tract is a part of the Public Storage facility at 2200 K Ave. Notwithstanding these two sites, the redevelopment and revitalization of the retail areas surrounding the neighborhood would offer the greatest potential for future development.



Demographics

The neighborhood is composed of a diverse mix of persons. Census reports from 1990 reported that the median age of the neighborhood was 30.4 years old. Over fifty-three percent (53%) of the households in this area have an income between \$25,000 and \$50,000 with a median household income of \$36,610. This median income was more than 20% lower than the median income of Collin County, which was \$46,020.

The information gathered from census material was comparable to information gathered from the Neighborhood Survey. Of some 579 homes in the Armstrong Park Area who received surveys by mail, a total of 227 were returned for a 39% participation rate.



Of those persons responding to the survey, 62% were Anglo, 17% Hispanic, 6% African-American, and 5% indicated "Other" when asked to describe their ethnic background.

When asked about their professions, the largest response came from the "homemaker" category, followed closely by professional, clerical and teacher categories. Forty-nine percent (49%) of those responding to the survey are employed in Plano. Forty-two percent (42%) of respondents listed an annual family income of less than \$50,000.

Small Town Family Atmosphere and Sense of Community

Goal: To preserve the quality of life offered to neighborhood residents and to promote a sense of pride in the community.

One of the most common responses to the question, “What is the one quality about this neighborhood that you most want to preserve?” as posed in the Neighborhood Survey, was that the neighborhood has a small town, family atmosphere and a strong sense of community amongst its residents.



The Armstrong Park Neighborhood Association (APNA) has been instrumental in working to further that feeling by organizing neighborhood meetings, community workdays in the parks and occasional block parties for residents. This has been met with measured success, but members now feel that it is time to take further steps to insure that residents have a

sense of community and have a comfortable level of familiarity with one another. The residents of the neighborhood will pursue this goal with the following steps:

- **Institute a “welcome wagon” system to welcome new families to the neighborhood and to communicate to them the community goals as outlined in the Armstrong Park Neighborhood Plan.** This will be accomplished by distributing a Welcome Packet which will include a copy of the latest APNA newsletter, a copy of the Neighborhood Plan, a list of commonly used phone numbers, and brochures designed by City departments to illustrate effective use of the solid waste services, the top ten code violations, the residential rehabilitation program and a directory of the neighborhood.
- **Create a Neighborhood Directory.** The residents feel that a directory would greatly improve the ability of the residents to know each other and to communicate more effectively throughout the neighborhood.
- **Publish a quarterly newsletter.** Since one benefit of participation in the Neighborhood Planning Program is assistance with publishing a quarterly newsletter, the residents feel that it is important to capitalize on this benefit and to begin to become familiar with the efforts necessary to compile, publish and distribute the newsletter so that it can be continued once the Neighborhood Services Division completes its involvement with the neighborhood.
- **Expand the Neighborhood Phone Tree to include all residents.** A phone tree would be an effective way to spread information quickly through the neighborhood when time sensitive information is needed. The phone tree would also eliminate the burden of notification from one person and distribute it evenly among several members.

- **Have more neighborhood socials, mini-projects (e.g. clean the alleys, fix-ups, and minor maintenance for the elderly), block parties, and events for kids (like neighborhood softball games).** Residents felt that a more diverse offering of activities in the neighborhood might appeal to a wider spectrum of individuals. As people begin to attend these events, the devotion to the neighborhood and to other neighbors would increase and the sense of community would become even stronger.



- **The neighborhood needs a meeting place..** Neighborhood activities are often scheduled in the Harrington Library meetings rooms, which are often booked months in advance. If additional meetings, socials, and activities are to be successful, the residents need a meeting place in a climate-controlled setting that will be comfortable and easily accessible.
- **Combat apathy of residents.** Apathy is a dangerous mindset in an aging neighborhood. Because residents are comfortable with the established nature of the neighborhood, they often fail to see threatening situations until the peril becomes so immediate that they have little choice but to react. APNA is working hard to determine the best means of communicating the importance of maintaining a sense of community, involving as many of the residents as possible and focusing on issues and

conditions that are important to its residents. Some ideas for future actions include:

- Notify residents of meetings by posting notices on doors and then later following up with a phone call to remind them.
- Work with the schools to get information out and find issues that appeal to residents who have children.
- Members should walk the neighborhood to increase awareness of conditions among the members and awareness of the association among the residents.
- Implement a block captain hierarchy to foster grassroots involvement on the block level.

The residents would also like to request that the City of Plano further the goal of increasing a sense of community in Armstrong Park by implementing the following recommendation:

- **Install Neighborhood Sign Toppers.** Sign toppers have been a well-received benefit of neighborhood plan implementation in Plano. Toppers would help to delineate neighborhood boundaries and provide an easily recognizable, collective name for the “place” that is the Armstrong Park Neighborhood.

Neighborhood Maintenance

Goal: To preserve property values by improving maintenance and upkeep of properties and the level of code compliance in the neighborhood through educational efforts, personal efforts on the part of the residents, and effective collaboration with the City of Plano Property Standards Department.

Housing is the backbone of a neighborhood and as the neighborhood ages, it becomes increasingly important to insure that the houses in the Armstrong Park neighborhood are maintained in a manner that will prevent damage to the structural integrity of the home or a decline in property values. The majority of the homes in the Armstrong Park Neighborhood have been well maintained.



However, isolated properties have experienced what could be considered significant deterioration. It is important that these homes be returned to a satisfactory level of maintenance as quickly as possible and that future efforts center on prevention of further deterioration.



In addition to maintenance of structures themselves, it is also important to maintain the parts of the property that contribute to the overall atmosphere of the neighborhood, primarily the lawns, shrubs, trees, fences, and any outbuildings on the properties. For these reasons, the neighborhood would like to focus on the following recommendations in hopes of encouraging residents to comply with City codes for the benefit of the entire neighborhood:

- **Institute an effective education campaign throughout the neighborhood to encourage efficient use of the sanitation services offered by the City.** Residents should be encouraged to remove their carts from the pickup site, to store the carts in a secure location with the lid closed and to ensure that garbage in the carts is properly bagged and tied to prevent stray items from littering the alleys during collection.
- **Strictly enforce City Codes.** Residents are concerned that Code Enforcement in the neighborhood could be approached more strictly, especially when dealing with issues such as tree and grass overgrowth, outdoor storage and other violations visible from the street or alley that

influence the overall appearance of the neighborhood. To facilitate this suggestion, the residents will pursue the following goals for themselves:

- Residents will log code violation complaints in a journal to be kept by a member of the association who will meet regularly with City of Plano Neighborhood Property Standards Specialists to discuss these issues, follow up on complaints, and work towards resolution of violations.
- Residents will continue a yard of the month program for the entire neighborhood to recognize properties demonstrating exceptional landscaping.
- Residents will host a neighborhood-wide clean up day.
- Residents will work to initiate partnerships with local service or charitable organizations that could assist residents with beautification efforts.



● **Spread the word on the First Time Homebuyer**



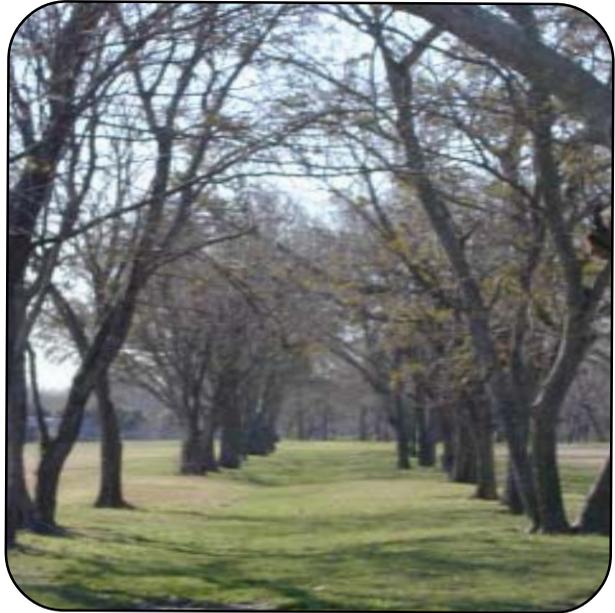
Program. The residents feel that home ownership is a vehicle to neighborhood pride and would like to encourage as many of the residents as possible to take steps to purchase their homes if they have not already done so.

- **Ensure that alley and street conditions are maintained.** Many of the alleys and streets in Armstrong Park have experienced substantial subsidence over the years, leaving uneven driving surfaces, potholes, and ineffective storm water drainage. Residents request that reconstruction of the streets and alleys in Armstrong Park be planned and implemented.

Preservation of Neighborhood Trees

Goal: To preserve the trees in the neighborhood as one of the resources that contributes to the overall character of the neighborhood.

Trees provide a peaceful character to the neighborhood that evokes a sense of nostalgia. Tree lined streets have long been a desirable factor in neighborhoods, especially in a community where this is the exception rather than the rule. For this reason, the residents hope to make the preservation of the trees in the neighborhood a priority for future action. To this end, the following recommendations are made:



- **Replace dead trees in the park, especially near the playground equipment at the northwest corner of the intersection of 19th St. and N Ave.** As the trees in the park age, there is a need to supplement the existing tree life with new plantings in order to offset the losses associated with age, wind, storm, or disease.

- **Ask the City of Plano Forester to evaluate the condition of trees throughout the park and make recommendations for preserving those trees.** Many of the trees in the park seem to be dying (especially newly planted trees). Residents would like to meet with the Forester to discuss the best options for those trees and to determine the best plan of action for future trees in Willow Creek Park.
- **Make water available for watering trees in the park.** Trees are a vital resource in the park as well as on private property. It is important to protect that resource, including making water available to supplement summer rains.

- **Work to preserve or replace the trees throughout the neighborhood on personal property.** Many of the residents in the Armstrong Park have mature trees on their property. These trees are beyond the water and growth stages of life and now require a good bit of maintenance to ensure that they remain healthy and safe. In order to accomplish this, the residents feel that several steps should be taken, including:
 - Have the City of Plano Forester come to neighborhood socials to give advice on tree maintenance and preservation.
 - Provide educational brochures for residents describing the appropriate time and way to trim, fertilize, or plant trees.
 - Host a neighborhood tree drive.
 - Find a nursery that will give discounts to the residents to replace dead trees in their yards to beautify the neighborhood.
 - Plant trees for disabled people.
 - Organize a neighborhood help committee to help people trim their trees.
 - Include a list of service providers in the Neighborhood Directory to help people find reputable tree trimmers, garden supply stores or other services.



Park Maintenance

Goal: To improve the appearance and conditions in Willow Creek Park.

Willow Creek Park runs from the intersection of 19th Street and N Ave. northeast, diagonally through the neighborhood, almost to the intersection of Jupiter Rd. and Park Blvd. Because so many of the homes in the neighborhood border the park, proper landscape maintenance, regular cleaning, and adequate facilities are important to a great number of the residents in Armstrong Park. To this end, the following recommendations were made:

- **The parks need more lighting.** Additional lights are needed around playground equipment. Several of the umbrella lights on the bike trails between P Ave. and Roanoke Dr. have been removed as a result of vandalism. These lights need to be replaced. Also, one light pole is located in the creek area and is highly inaccessible for routine maintenance. This light should be either shortened or relocated to a more accessible site in the same general vicinity.
- **The parks need more benches.**



- **Weeds in the park, specifically the creek beds, should be cleared at least twice per year.** Current “off season” clearing is ineffective. During summer months, weeds become so dense that the residents who often volunteer to clean the trash and debris in the creek bed are physically unable to access the creek bed due to the overgrowth of weeds. If weeds were cleared during the month of April, May or June, residents would be willing to do periodic mowing, pulling or trimming to ensure that the overgrowth is held in check until the second regular park cleaning in the winter.
- **There should be more litter control in the parks.** Currently the City Parks Department contracts with a cleaning agency to maintain the area immediately adjacent to the playground and the bathrooms in Willow Creek Park. Residents would like to see the scope of this daily cleaning include picking up trash in the park and in the creek bed on at least a weekly basis.





- **Landscaping around the pavilions should be improved.** Because the area around the pavilion is so heavily traveled, the turf in the area has thinned and decorative landscaping has not been successful. Vandals have damaged or destroyed much of the landscaping that has been installed in the area, so residents feel that efforts should focus on maintaining a healthy turf coverage in areas surrounding heavily used facilities in the park.
- **The park needs a nice volleyball court.** Currently, the facilities in the park accommodate the needs of toddlers and elementary age children. As there are many homes with older children in the Armstrong Park Neighborhood, the residents would like to see some activities for these older children to enjoy in the park.
- **Install landscaping in the Park around the wall near the Panther Park Shopping Center to stop graffiti.** Vandalism has been a concern in Willow Creek Park and in the Armstrong Park Neighborhood over the past few years. Residents feel that installing fast growing shrubbery along the wall (on the park side) near the Panther Park Shopping Center might serve as a deterrent to vandalism.

- **Request PISD arts program students to design a mural for the retaining wall near the Panther Park Shopping Center.** Residents would like to foster a partnership between the PISD arts programs and the City of Plano Parks Department that would allow students to design and install an art mural on the wall near the Panther Park Shopping Center. This mural would provide a cultural display of art for park users while possibly preventing further vandalism on the wall.
- **Trim trees in the park near the Panther Park Shopping Center so that existing lights will be more effective.** Residents also feel that better lighting in the area near the Panther Park Shopping Center would deter vandalism along the wall.
- **Install screens across drainage holes in Panther Park retaining wall.** When storm water runoff comes through the holes in the retaining wall near the Panther Park Shopping Center it often brings with it debris, mud and solid waste that has blown out of the dumpsters behind the Panther Park Shopping Center. Screens would prevent this unsightly deposit onto the park sidewalks below.



- **Install an irrigation system and replace dead or dying trees in the park.** Residents of Armstrong Park agreed to water newly planted trees for the playground area near the intersection of N Ave. and 19th Street in the late 1990's. Residents took turns watering and caring for the trees by transporting personal water hoses to the site for connection to a parks department water spigot near the site. However, in 1999, a water fountain was installed with the waterline that had been dedicated to the irrigation. Subsequently, the residents were unable to irrigate the landscaping during the dry summer month, leading to eventual death of the trees.
- **Advise City employees and contractors to exercise caution and care when using sidewalks as driveways in the Parks and/or upgrade any sidewalks not designed to serve as maintenance drives.** In many areas, sidewalks have crumbled under the weight of repeated use as a driveway. Some sidewalks have been upgraded to better handle the weight of maintenance vehicles, but many have not. Also, in areas where there is a sharp turning radius or where sidewalks are too narrow, tire tracks have destroyed the grass or landscaping and left unsightly bare patches or mud holes.



To facilitate the recommendations offered for the City of Plano, residents would like to initiate the following efforts:

- **Continue the Adopt a Park efforts.** This would include quarterly clearing of the undergrowth in the creek beds as mentioned above, as well as any special projects that parks personnel might need assistance with. Residents will work to identify other groups, such as the employees at Brookshire's, civic groups, Plano ISD, etc., who might be interested in partnering with the Armstrong Park Neighborhood Association for the Adopt a Park.
- **Use the neighborhood newsletter** to encourage residents adjacent to the park to police it regularly and to report any problems to the police or the parks department as quickly as possible for resolution.

Safety and Crime Prevention

Goal: To increase safety in the neighborhood.

Safety is a primary concern for the residents of any community. Armstrong Park residents are concerned about maintaining the current level of safety and of warding off any increases in crime or vandalism. Approximately 86% of the respondents to the Neighborhood Survey said they feel safe walking in their neighborhood during the day. However, only 34% of those same respondents would feel safe walking in the neighborhood at night. Overall, 47% of the respondents said that they worry a lot about crime with the highest reported concerns listed as follows (multiple answers were allowed):

has shown that light is one of the best deterrents to crime (which is illustrated by the fact that the very neighborhoods that are working to combat rising crime rates are still the darkest). Residents in Armstrong Park feel that it is imperative that action be taken to find some resolution to this problem. They recommend:

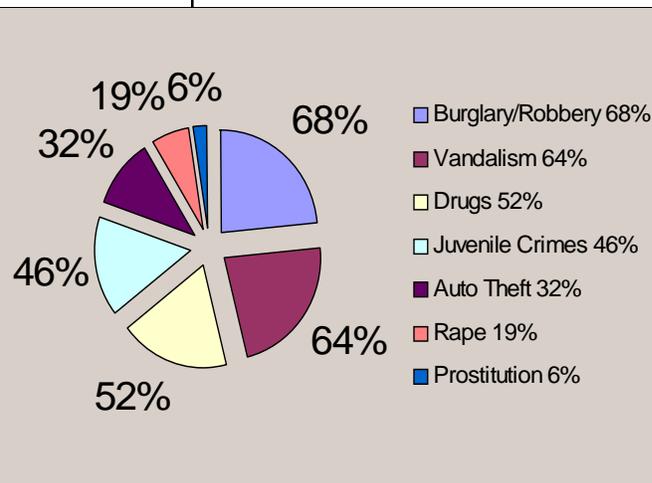
- **Increase lighting around the park and along the jogging trail.**



- **Install a timer for adjustment of park lights for daylight savings time.**
- **Add additional street lights (especially in the long blocks).**

Additionally, other areas of concern for the safety of the neighborhood might be addressed with the following recommendations:

- **Work with DART officials to address concerns about location of stops and vandalism that often occurs at these stops.** The bus stops located in and near the neighborhood are often the focus of vandalism. This vandalism is often in place for many weeks and becomes an eyesore for the neighborhood. Residents would like to have a contact within the DART organization that they could call if any vandalism occurs at these sites.



Concerns, the neighborhood would first like to focus on the level of lighting in the neighborhood. Lighting issues continue to plague Plano’s older neighborhoods and Armstrong Park is no exception to that rule. Although spacing of the lights usually meets City of Plano standards of at least every 600 feet, dense tree canopies block light on the streets and the residents are left to deal with a “dark” neighborhood. History

- **Start a Neighborhood Safety Task force and organize a Neighborhood Patrol.** A Neighborhood Patrol could serve as the eyes and ears of the police department in the neighborhood. This group could work to spread information to residents in the neighborhood about crime trends, safety concerns and the efforts of the task force. The task force will work to improve safety in the neighborhood by helping to report violations of the curfew laws, vandalism and suspicious activities in the parks. The group could also prepare information for the neighborhood newsletter encouraging parents to observe curfew laws and to direct their children to do the same.



- **Continue to support the Neighborhood Police Officer (NPO) program.** The neighborhood feels that the NPO program has been one of the greatest assets that the community has. In the past several years, the NPO program has worked to provide an individualized level of attention for Armstrong Park. That heightened attention has worked to lower crime rates, increase the level of comfort that residents have with the police department, and allow the officers to serve as a great champion of the overall well being and quality of life in Armstrong Park.

Neighborhood Traffic

Goal: To insure that neighborhood traffic does not adversely affect the quality of life in Armstrong Park.

The Armstrong Park Neighborhood is often adversely affected by speeding and cut-through traffic. The neighborhood lies between the area Elementary School and Jr. High School and often has high levels of school related traffic. Traffic coming and going from Willow Creek Park also affects the neighborhood. In order to address these issues, the neighborhood recommends the following:

- **Install traffic calming devices on the roads with highest speeds and/or volumes.** Several of the roads that most need to be studied for traffic calming devices are:
 - Armstrong Dr., east of P Ave.
 - Fairfield Dr., east and west of P Ave.
 - Sylvan Dr., between P Ave. and N Ave.
 - Briarwood Dr., from Roanoke to Jupiter
 - N Ave., from Park Blvd. to 19th St
- **Lower speed limits on neighborhood streets.** In addition to traffic calming measures, residents feel that the speed limit on residential streets in the neighborhood should be lowered to further impact speeding traffic.
- **Install the floppy stick reflectors on Park Blvd. east of N Ave.** Similar reflectors have been installed on Park Blvd. east of P Ave., to slow oncoming traffic on Park Blvd. as they approach the residential area and to warn oncoming vehicles of vehicles parked on the street.

Since many of the homes in the Armstrong Park Neighborhood were constructed with one-car garages and driveways, homeowners who have more than one or two cars, often resort to parking additional cars on the streets. This has created an unsightly situation in the neighborhood because the cars and trucks blocking the view from the street diminish curb appeal of homes

and likewise the neighborhood. The situation also narrows the drivable width of the residential lanes making it difficult for more than one car to pass at a time. In order to address this issue, the neighborhood planning team suggests the following recommendations:

- **Heighten enforcement efforts in Armstrong Park.** Members of the Neighborhood Planning Team believe that the most expedient means of correcting the parking situation is to strictly enforce the regulations that are already in place.
 - Ensure that cars are parked on the street in the correct manner and on the correct side of the street. Cars are often parked too far from the curb, facing oncoming traffic or with one of their bumpers sticking into the driving lanes. This creates even more congestion for drivers.



- Cars that are parked illegally should be tagged once for a warning and then subsequently towed at the owners' expense.
- Enforcement efforts should be focused on evenings and weekends, when the problem is most apparent.
- Residents need a hotline to call for enforcement of safe parking.