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To see more photos of Arlington's Clarendon neighborhood, go to washingtonpost.com/realstate.

Where 'walkable suburb' is hardly an oxymoron

BY HARRIET EDLESON

When Billy Buck and his wife, Heather, take their family out for dinner, driving is extraneous. In fact, daughter Graham, 5, asked her father the other day, "Why are we getting into the van?"

Indeed, the best way to experience Clarendon is on foot. In this compact urban village, you can get just about everywhere without a car. And residents there and in nearby neighborhoods like it that way.

The Bucks live in the Lyon Village neighborhood just north of the Clarendon section of Arlington, where more than 50 restaurants are within walking distance of their 1920s farmhouse. "We don't drive if we don't need to," said Billy Buck, 37.

Once a place to drive through en route to somewhere else, Clarendon during the past decade and a half has become a lively and somewhat diverse community.

"It's young and vibrant," said Joshua Bogart, 41, who was drawn to the neighborhood in 2009 by convenient shopping, transportation, entertainment and access to Washington. "It's just really changed."

Mixed use: Clarendon evolved into Arlington County's original downtown when streetcars began to traverse the area in 1896; two lines once intersected where the neighborhood's Metro station now sits. According to "Arlington Heritage: Vignettes of a Virginia County" by Eleanor Lee Templeman, Clarendon was named and dedicated March 31, 1900. In 1920, Clarendon attempted to incorporate as a separate town but failed, according to the National Register of Historic Places.

The transformation of Clarendon oc-



Dorris Gonzalez takes her dogs, Moochie and Hero, for a walk in Clarendon. Amenities are close at hand, and home prices reflect that. Condos and apartments are plentiful, as are diverse houses such as the bungalow shown at left.

curred from 2000 to 2003, spurred largely by Market Common, a mixed-use development of retail stores and restaurants, office space, townhouses, open public space, and public parking.

Because of Arlington County's compact development policies, it was possible to create new uses for the land and new reasons for people to move to and visit Clarendon while preserving the stable, older adjacent neighborhoods such as Lyon Village.

Clarendon is more than just the commercial and mixed-use area adjacent to the Metro stop and the neighborhood's two major arteries.

"Wilson Boulevard was Main Street for Arlington," said Matt Hussmann, executive director of the Clarendon Alliance, an organization made up of businesses, property owners and civic association representatives.

"Arlington's original downtown was Clarendon. It was a downtown with residential next to it on both sides," he

said. It's a mix of single-family houses, storefront retail, high-rises, townhouses, rooftop bars and restaurants of every stripe. "It's a little downtown. It's a real urban village."

Eating, drinking, shopping and playing: Clarendon has dozens of restaurants and bars that attract residents and visitors alike. For some, including college students, families and the unattached, Clarendon is a destination for its lively nightlife.

From Ann Taylor and Crate & Barrel to Barnes & Noble and the Apple Store, retail chain storefronts dot Market Common, with each store opening to the courtyard. The area's retail mix includes independently owned stores such as the Grateful Red wine shop and LeoNora Gourmet Bakery and national chains Whole Foods and Trader Joe's.

Clarendon hosts close to 100 special events each year, organized by the Clarendon Alliance, including Clarendon Day

and a Mardi Gras parade.

Popular bar crawls, some which are benefits, bring as many as 2,000 visitors into the neighborhood, says Greg Cahill, former executive director of the Clarendon Alliance and owner of Whitlow's on Wilson, a restaurant and bar that opened in 1995 after its predecessor, Whitlow's, closed in downtown Washington a couple of years before. Some noise comes with the territory of an urban village.

Living there: Clarendon is a triangle formed by Wilson Boulevard to the northwest, Courthouse Road to the east and 10th Street to the south.

The community is not inexpensive. Within the past year, 105 properties sold in the area. A studio condominium sold for \$299,000 on the low end, while a three-bedroom, 4½-bathroom townhouse captured \$1.45 million. A studio condo for \$329,500 and a 1926 three-bedroom, two-bath bungalow-style house for \$1.265 million are among the five properties currently on the market.

Transportation: Access to and within Clarendon is easy via Metrorail's Orange Line Clarendon stop, the 38B Metrobus route and Arlington Transit buses. Bicycles are another option through the Capital Bikeshare program.

Schools: Francis Scott Key Elementary School and Washington-Lee High School.

Crime: During the past 12 months, according to Arlington County police, there were seven aggravated assaults, seven robberies and 10 burglaries.

Harriet Edleson is a freelance writer.