

Longwood Forest History

Compiled by M. Armstrong

1978-2009

The neighborhood now known as Longwood Forest, at the intersection of College Blvd. and El Monte was originally known as the Long Family Farm. The original farmhouse and maintenance building were situated just east of the intersection of Delmar and 110th Terrace. There was a large well in the vicinity.

There was a riding stable, called Indian Creek Stables at the northwest corner of College Blvd. and Tomahawk Creek Parkway. This property was also part of the Long property, but was considered to be in the flood plain, so the developers of Longwood Forest had no interest in acquiring it. There was largely vacant property bordering the norther, southern and eastern boundaries.

As hard as it is to imagine, there was no Town Center, no Camelot Court, no Halbrook, and no commercial development along Tomahawk Creek Parkway. College Blvd. was a gravel road and ended at the intersection of what was then called Mission Road. The Kansas section of Interstate 435 opened in 1968, so while the highway was there, it was not as yet heavily traveled.

The Long property, consisting of 50 acres was bought in 1977 by Plaza Savings and Loan, and the development was spearheaded by Mr. Bob Simon. The five-acre tract at the easternmost end was considered to be unbillable, so was not included in the original purchase. The plat for the property was recorded at the county office on June 27, 1978.

The surveying and engineering was done by the Shafer, Kline and Warren engineering firm. They would have laid out the streets and sewers and divided the property into lots. This firm was formed in 1885 and played a big part in the development of downtown Kansas City.

There was a great deal of rock in the area, therefore a great deal of blasting needed to be done in order to lay the sewer lines. Interestingly enough there was a female supervisor at the head of the dynamite crew. She was obviously ahead of her time.

Gary Coursey of Hare and Hare was involved in the planning of the landscape. Hare and Hare is a long-standing group of landscape architects who had been operating in the Kansas City area since 1881. Some of their local projects include the campus at Kansas University and Kansas State University, Mission Hills, The Country Club Plaza and many other endeavors too numerous to mention. The company is now called Ochsner Hare and Hare.

The landscape planning included some unusual features. There is a large landscaped fountain at each of the two entrances. The interior streets end in cul-de-sacs graced with several additional landscaped islands. There were many mature oak trees on the property, which the developer attempted to save, and was largely successful in doing so.

One of the first couples to purchase a lot was Tony and Judy Kostusik, who still live at 4201 W. 110th Terrace. Tony and Judy bought their lot in August of 1978 and moved into their house in August of

1979. They have been long time supporters of the Homes Association and Tony was President of the home's association from 1993 -1999.

The first house was built by Larry Levy, and was at the corner of Delmar and College at 11015 Delmar. This house was finished in time for the Parade of Homes and won first prize. While the house was being used as a model home most of the appliances etc. were stolen. All of the plumbing and wiring were neatly capped off, so it was thought that the same people who had done the installing came back to undo what they had just recently installed.

There are many underground springs in the area. The house at 4301 W. 110th at the corner of 110th and Delmar was built atop a pond. Carl Walker the builder figured out a way to place the foundation on stilts. Apparently, there have been no resultant problems.

There was a maintenance man by the name of George, who patrolled the development on a regular basis, picking up the trash from the streets and building sites. He kept the neighborhood looking neat and clean during much of the building phase. George was sorely missed when he left.

By late 1979, several homes had cropped up in the development. By October 1980 there were 36 homes occupied, and by April of 1981 the number had swelled to 47. The 1983 roster consisted of 59 names. The development is now complete with 77 homes. Some of those original owners still reside in the neighborhood.

Some of the original builders were Tom French, Rick Standard, Gene Wuellner, Buddy Soloff, Jim Neighbors, Tom Masterson, Ron Mather, Lynn Goodman, Taylor Brady, Corey Lieberman, Sol Ellis, Greg Walton and Ralph Williamson. Soloff and Brady built passive solar houses.

In October 1981 the Longwood Forest Homes Association was formed. The number of houses was now at 47. Community Federal contributed enough money to finance one half of the proposed budget, so that the association could begin. (Approximately \$10,000). Each lot owner was assessed \$75 for the months of January through May. The total beginning budget amounted to \$15,500. Shellie Neiburger was the first homes association president.

In the spring of 1981, the City of Leawood began a review of the master plan. Much of what was then undeveloped area in the southern part of the city was zoned for medium density residential and was not being considered for commercial establishments. Nearby homeowners began to form opposition groups and started writing letters and attending plan commission meetings. Longwood Forest was not alone in the endeavor. There are letters on file from Verona Gardens, Huntington Farms and Leawood South to name a few.

Up until this time, Leawood had been considered a bedroom community. There was very little commercial development anywhere in the city.

With all of the vacant land bordering our new development it was not long before re-zoning applications began to appear. Much of the vacant land was then zoned agricultural, and there were large fields of grasses etc. as far as the eye could see.

In 1982 a tree planning program was undertaken with Bernie Favalaro heading the committee. In cooperation with Alan Kimes of Rosehill Nursery, trees were planted along all the parkways. Each tree was planted with a different species. The cost of the program was \$65 per tree.

College Blvd.	Hard Maple
Delmar	Sawtooth Oak
110 th E Delmar	Sawtooth Oak
110 th W Delmar	Respire Pear
110 th E Buena Vista	Greenspire Linden
110 th W Buena Vista	Shademaster Locust
Buena Vista	Pin Oak
Catalina	Sweet Gum
Alhambra	Hard Maple

In 1985 a very large proposal including 120 acres for the area directly south of Longwood Forest was presented to the Leawood Plan Commission by Mr. J.D. Spears, who had purchased the property in 1975. Mr. Spears was a well-known long-time developer in the Johnson Co. area. The name of the proposal was Leawood Campus. The property was zoned for medium density residential of “Concerned Citizens of Leawood”.

Longwood residents attended endless plan commission and city council meetings attempting to voice their concerns. The most famous of these meetings was an evening plan commission held at Ranch Mart Auditorium. Cal Spradley was the plan commission chairman. There was much input from residents and the meeting ended at 3:00 AM. After this debacle the city passed a law stating that in the future, the plan commission meetings would have to end by midnight.

In August 1985, developer, Whitney Kerr wrote a letter to Mr. Robert Sander, the city architect. In the letter, Mr. Kerr states:

“Following our presentation before the Leawood Planning Commission on Tuesday, July 23, I have had some time to reflect on the nearly hysterical reaction evidenced by some of the Longwood Forest neighbors. I think if the Longwood Forest residents can be objective and look at the above successful examples of quality mixed use development they will recognize the Leawood Campus development as a wonderful opportunity for the City of Leawood instead of the disaster some of them fear.”

Because of the stiff opposition to Leawood Campus, action by the plan commission was continually delayed until the developer eventually lost interest. The area was sold to the Alpert Group which developed The Woods in 2000, an upscale residential area which borders Longwood on the south.

In 1990 plans were in place to extend Mission Road to the south. The extension was to be called Tomahawk Creek Parkway. Included in the plan was a proposal for a bridge over Indian Creek, and an extension of the College Blvd. east to State Line.

In conjunction with this the office park along Tomahawk Creek Parkway was under consideration. This area had long been under consideration for apartments. Longwood residents had long been apposed to apartment buildings on this site and had spent much time and effort in voicing our objections. Again, we made the newspapers. On July 25, 1996 this article appeared in the Kansas City Star.

“Last month, dozens of residents, many from the Longwood Forest subdivision just north of the proposed office park, filled City Hall to oppose the project because they feared it would change the character of their neighborhood, lead to increased traffic and decrease the value of their homes. They even printed up a booklet summarizing their fears.”

Again, after much deliberation, the Leawood City Council approved the project in July 1996.

At the intersection of what is now College Blvd. and Tomahawk Creek Parkway there were numerous development proposals. Among them were a nursing home, mental health facility, apartment complex etc. Each time there was a new proposed re-zoning, the residents of Longwood sprang into action. Perhaps the sight of such an awesome and well-prepared group did a lot to dissuade would be developers.

At about this time a widening of Mission Road was in the planning stages. Barry Glasberg, David Kaplan, Dottie Riley and Stuart Stein took the lead in negotiating with the city over matters such as adequate screening and meaningful landscaping on our eastern border. A satisfactory result was obtained.

In May 1996 through September 1997 the city of Leawood undertook a widening and revision of College Blvd., which affected the entire southern border of Longwood Forest. Tony Kostusik was then president of the home's association. Tony spent many hours in negotiations with the city. The berm at the top of the hill at the Delmar intersection lowered four and a half feet. The street was widened, and left turn lanes were added. The fountain at Delmar was demolished and rebuilt. After much negotiation a rock wall and fence were installed and continued for several feet east of Delmar.

The last undeveloped area bordering our neighborhood to the east came before the Leawood Plan Commission in August 2004. The property was zoned AG (Agricultural) and the developer was asking for a re-zoning to SD-O (Planned Office District). The proposed development was to be called Tomahawk Point Office Park and was to be situated on the five acres of Long Property at the intersection of College Blvd. and Tomahawk Creek Parkway. As president of the Longwood Forest Homes Association, Rufus Nye spearheaded the effort to monitor the proceedings. He was ably assisted by Dottie Riley, Stuart Stein and Pat Turner. The proposal was for four two story office buildings with the closest parking lot to be approximately 42 feet from the back-lot lines of residences on Alhambra.

Again, this called for attendance at many plan commission and city council meetings to voice neighborhood concerns. The resulting compromise was a reduction from four to two office buildings, adequate screening from the Longwood Forest border and a larger setback from the bordering lots.

Yet again we made the pages of the Kansas City Star, dated June 22, 2005. Neighbors and developers Compromise On Tomahawk Pointe Proposal.

“Weeks of icy squabbling between neighbors and developers melted into compromise Monday night as Leawood's City Council voted 7-1 to approve a preliminary plan for the Tomahawk Pointe office complex.” “The approval of a preliminary plan ends a length and at times contentious debate of the project which initially came to the City Council in April.”

Since Longwood Forest was developed there has been a flurry of development in the immediate vicinity. Hawthorne was completed in 1986, Hallbrook and Camelot Court in 1987, Town Center in 1996, and most recently Park Place which opened in January 2008.

An interest observation on the part of this writer who lived through most of the preceding events is as follows:

The joining together of Longwood residents in a common cause throughout our "growing pains" resulted in a neighborhood bond being formed. Neighbors worked together in an effort to protect our borders. Due to these cooperative efforts throughout the years we came to know each other. We sat side by side in countless numbers of meetings. We were the Longwood Pioneers. All of the efforts paid off in the Longwood Forest became a unique place to live. The fact that 21 of our original 77 owners still live in the neighborhood is perhaps a testament to this fact.

Our thanks go out to all of those who were willing to spend the time and effort to attend meetings, make presentations at city hall, write letters, serve on committees and lend support to each cause. Longwood Forest continues to enjoy the fruits of your labor.

PAST PRESIDENTS OF LONGWOOD FOREST HOMES ASSOCIATION

Shellie Neiburger	1981-1983
Stuart Stein	1983-1985
Peg Armstrong	1985-1987
Arnold Balanoff	1987-1989
Barry Glasberg	1989-1993
Tony Kostusik	1993-1999
Ray DiTirro	1998-2001
Guy Burton	2001-2004
Rufus Nye	2004-2008
Tom Eichholz	2008