



# Laurel Park NEWS

HISTORIC LAUREL PARK  
DOWNTOWN SARASOTA



SPRING 2016

## A Laurel Park History Lesson



*LEFT: Jack and Nancy Notestein walking along row of palms on Oak Street in 1973. TOP RIGHT & BOTTOM CENTER: Madison Court before 1980. BOTTOM RIGHT: Corner of Madison Court and Oak Street facing east before 1980.*

Though many consider Laurel Park to be the preeminent historic neighborhood in Sarasota, few residents have lived here prior to the 1990s. In fact, a sizable proportion of our residents and home owners are fairly new to the community.

So with this issue, we decided to take a look back at the neighborhood through the recollections of some of our longest residing neighbors to get a sense of what it was like in years past.

Al and Yvonne Hafner may be the residents with the longest continuous connection to Laurel Park. Yvonne's grandparents purchased the Spanish-

style bungalow at 542 Madison Court in 1934. The home is one of the original buildings in the Washington Park subdivision east of Osprey Ave. and was constructed in 1925. Her grandparents used the home for their vacations from Michigan and spent the winters here.

Yvonne remembers spending the winter in the home on Madison Court at age 12 in 1947 and remembers playing with some other children in the neighborhood, such as the son of Judge Charles "Chick" Early, who had physically moved the Dutch colonial home on the corner of Oak St. and Ohio Place into Laurel Park by barge.

As a young woman, Yvonne brought her husband Al down from Michigan to visit the home in 1955 and they brought their children as well for winter vacations every year. She recalls loading the kids in sleeping bags in the back of their station wagon at 2 or 3 a.m. in Michigan and heading down to Florida via U.S. 41.

Back then, Yvonne said there was not a lot to do in Sarasota, especially at night. During the day, they would watch the Ringling Bros. circus rehearse at their winter quarters, eat at downtown restaurants (such as Jonny's, which was near the current

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



*LEFT: Jodi John's Brother in front of 1676 Laurel St. in the 1950s. TOP CENTER: The Gillespie Home. BOTTOM CENTER: 1677 Laurel St. before renovation in the mid 1990s. RIGHT: Jodi John's Family on Laurel Street facing east in the 1950s.*

location of Two Senioritas), and walk through the Arcade that was located where Marina Jack now stands. At night they would attend estate auctions at an auction house near the airport (they served Coke, which was a treat). At one of the auctions she purchased a candelabra owned by Edith Ringling.

Going to the beach was a major activity and was always one of the first things they did upon arrival in Sarasota. She said they would go swimming no matter what time of year or how cold it was, because it was always warmer than Michigan. She remembers that Madison Court and the surrounding streets would get packed with cars during spring training baseball games that used to be held in Payne Park.

Yvonne and her family knew all the other owners on Madison Court and nearby streets over the years but that they were not too connected with the other sections of the neighborhood.

Yvonne' son Paul moved to Sarasota after college in the early 1980s. He renovated Yvonne and Al's home for them in preparation for their

eventual retirement in Florida in 1994 (though they still go back to Michigan). Paul Hafner and his wife, Martha, ultimately purchased Judge Early's home and were among the pioneers in the renaissance of the neighborhood starting in the 1990s.

Jodi Johns is another resident with long ties to the neighborhood, but her connection is to the area west of Osprey Ave. Jodi's grandparents purchased 1677 Laurel St. (originally 255 Laurel St.) in 1944. The home is actually two homes joined together. The front portion of the home was built in 1894 and moved from a location closer to the bay to its current location in the 1920s. The back portion of the home was built in teens and also moved onto its current location.

Jodi's family also owned the home next door at 1676 Laurel St. This was a Sears and Roebucks catalog craftsman style home, which has been changed very little from its original condition.

Jodi and her husband purchased her grandparents' home in 1996 years after it had been sold to others and it had fallen into very bad shape.

They substantially remodeled the home and the property now features apartments in the rear, a chicken coop and even a structure for growing mushrooms. In the remodel, Jodi restored many of the unique features of the home, such as a wraparound porch and central hallway that allowed fresh air to flow through the house as it did prior to the days of air conditioning.

Jodi remembers playing in the neighborhood with her brother and is sad for loss of the historic homes and structures that were located behind her home on Morrill St. and Ringling Blvd. that have since been demolished (including the Gillespie home that later became Prew School). She remembers that there was a small Asian community in the area of Orange Ave. and Morrill St.

Jodi's grandmother was heavily involved in the Sarasota community and she has many old letters and publications from period, including letters that her son had sent in code during the war to let them know he was safe.

Jack Notestein is another Laurel Park resident who remembers the

neighborhood before it was called “Laurel Park”. The Laurel Park name was introduced in the early 1990s by residents trying to refurbish the neighborhood and rehabilitate its old houses. Prior to that time, different sections of the neighborhood went by different names such as Washington Park and “Morrill Mound.” Jack’s recollections are reported separately in this issue.

Also included in this issue is a reprint of an article that was originally published in the Laurel Park News in spring 1995. It is a collection of memories from Judge Charles “Chick” Early who lived in

the neighborhood for over 60 years until his death at the age of 102.

These collections of reminiscences provide a number of interesting and unexpected lessons about Laurel Park. Perhaps what stands out the most is that it seems as if Laurel Park has never been more cohesive as a neighborhood than it is at this time.

The area has always attracted prominent members of town, artists and visitors; and has been a part of many cherished memories for those who live here since the 1920s. But never before has Laurel Park as a unified neighborhood been so

strongly valued by its residents. The present day Laurel Park features regular social gatherings (Tunes in the Park!), public benefit projects, and is working together to maintain the residential character of the community.

While the continuing loss of historic homes in Laurel Park upsets those who treasure its past. The strength and quality of the relationships between the residents who live here seems to be at its peak. Perhaps in 50 years, we will be asked to remember how good it was living in Laurel Park back in 2016.

– Chris Jaensch



405 S. Osprey Avenue front



405 S Osprey being demolished



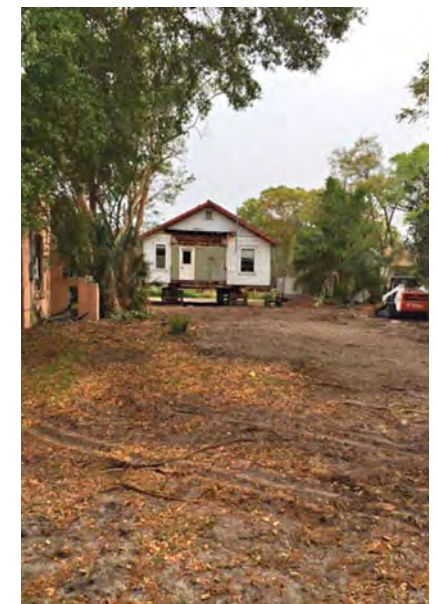
1652 Oak Street before



627 Ohio Place before



627 Ohio Place after



1652 Oak Street after

## Transitions

### 1. DEMOLISHED:

627 Ohio Place. Two bedroom one bath home built in 1925.

### 2. MOVED:

1652 Oak Street. Two bedroom one bath home built in 1925. Currently moved to rear of the property on Devonshire Place.

### 3. DEMOLISHED:

405 S. Osprey Ave. Five bedroom five bath multi-family property formerly a single family home built in 1927.

# Before Laurel Park was “Laurel Park”

Growing up in Sarasota from 1949, I have many great memories of the places and people here. Our family would go to Red Sox games at Payne Park. Nearby, Hood’s Dairy, located on Washington Blvd., was home-delivering fresh milk in bottles with paper lids & cream on top. This later became Cook Cadillac and is now a county parking lot. At the corner of Laurel St. and Washington Blvd. was the ever-popular Dairy Queen, which bravely stood until (I think) sometime in the 80’s. Now, the Momentum Bank Bldg. stands on the site. Just south of that was McKown’s Market, owned by the Bryant family. Nancy and I used to shop there regularly in the 70’s when we first lived in the neighborhood and didn’t realize what a treasure it was until it was gone. The building, built in 1939 with a curved, glass-block front, became a beauty school/parlor then a gym and then...it was gone.



Before the Friendship Center was built, we would throw frisbees in Luke Wood Park. US 41 had not yet been cut through to the Bayfront. To the east, on land now occupied by McDonalds and Sarasota Ford, stood the Bidwell-Wood Home. First built in 1882 by Alfred Bidwell and later in 1895 purchased by Luke Wood, it is one of the oldest houses in Sarasota County and while “exploring” the vacant property in 1974, I came across an old cemetery in which soldiers and others from the post Civil War era had been buried. It was moved off-site in 1977 and again in 2006 to its present location in Pioneer Park -

1260 12th St.

We had (and still have) interesting neighbors where we live on Columbia Ct. Next door to us when we first rented our house for \$125 a month, lived Mr. Tom Jones, a tall, dapper gentleman and retired VP of Palmer Bank. Dressed in spats, and a suit and sporting a cane, he was a dapper gentleman of days gone by. Across the street lived Mr. & Mrs. Kitchen. He was a clocksmith who had a small shop on Pineapple Ave. just north of State St. (now a parking lot). The building was demolished but I salvaged about 150 glass blocks before the bulldozer got to them. At the corner of Oak St. and Columbia Ct. there is a jungle behind a wall. This home used to be owned by a doctor who lived here part of the year. Hans Wiehler, a botanist with whom I worked at Selby Botanical Gardens, bought the property and there, he developed the Gesneriad (African Violet Family) Research Foundation where he built a large greenhouse containing his “treasures” collected from various, tropical explorations around the world. His son, Daniel, replaced the greenhouse with a beautiful patio with tiled fountain and pool. He enhanced and expanded the landscape while keeping a “wild, natural look” - a tribute to his father, Hans.

As Sarasota continues to grow and change, learning about the people and events of the past gives a better perspective of life and humanity today.

– Jack Notestein



## Laurel Park Was...

Imagine an urban neighborhood where cows roam in open field, school children dash barefoot through grass taller than themselves, and the sweet smell of guava jelly floats in the air. You would be creating a picture of our neighborhood in the early 1920’s, a picture that is vivid in Charles Early’s memory.

Early, now a Sarasota taxation and estate planning attorney, lived first

in a house on Madison Court, then in one a stone’s throw away on Oak Street, from the time he was five years old until he married in 1950. He was kind enough to share some of his recollections of Sarasota’s early days, some of which follows:

### All Kinds of People:

Early tells of the baseball players who lived in the neighborhood and

practices at Payne Park, and also of the other personages who called the area home:

“Roy Spencer, a catcher for the Detroit Tigers, lived at the corner of Madison and Oak; Johnny Moore, an outfielder with the Phillies lived in one of the duplexes on Madison Court (both of which have subsequently been converted into single-family homes). The Ramfel house, which

is now home to Melody's Skin and Body Therapy, was a rooming house. Known as "Nelson Lodge," it was run by Gus Nelson, a strongman for Ringling Brothers' Circus. His wife, recalls Early, did the circus' costumes.

"The house you call the Walter Kennedy House (on the southwest corner of Oak Street and Colombia Court)—Judge Paul Albritton lived there, who was a circuit judge. He was born and raised in Sarasota. Sarasota County had its own circuit, and he was the judge for that circuit. During the depression, they couldn't afford to pay all the judges, so they joined with 8 other circuits. There were two judges from the south line of Hillsborough to the north line of Monroe County."

## Cows in the Road...

As the town was growing, Early says, "Sarasota had paved roads, and a lot of cows grazing on the grass between

the paved roads." The town planners were apparently well ahead of the town itself.

"Sarasota had all kinds of vacant houses. Sarasota was dirt poor—people would come down and ask to do work (for food)."

"Some (houses) sold for less than \$1000, when a good job was \$25 a week. Men with families got \$25 a week."

"My father's house was moved from what is now 17th Street. It was between the Trail and 17th Street. Judge Scheb's (on Lafayette Court) and others were moved by my father from Venice, every lot had a house and no house had anybody living in it. For a few hundred dollars, you could buy the house and the lot. For a few hundred more, you could pay to have the house moved."

"Virtually, there may've been one

restaurant that was open when the season was not on in the summertime. All the stores on Palm Avenue would close. All the hotels would close and on Wednesday afternoon, everything closed."

"In the summertime in Sarasota, you could hardly get away from the smell of somebody making guava jelly. People would have their windows open because they didn't have AC, and the smells would go for blocks," recalls Early. He says the neighborhood had numerous guava bushes and avocado trees: "We almost lived off avocados. My mother used to like to serve them because you didn't need a plate."

"There were three things people didn't have up north: avocados, mangoes, and guava. Everybody liked mangoes.

– Reprinted from *Laurel Park News*, Volume 3, Spring 1995

## Yes! I Want to be a Member of the Laurel Park Neighborhood Assoc.

Membership is open to everyone who lives in or owns property in Laurel Park. Unlike most neighborhood associations, renters are welcome to join, have a voice and vote! Membership benefits include newsletter, email updates of news and events in and around the neighborhood (including crime alerts), and opportunities to volunteer and meet your neighbors.

Membership must be renewed every year. If you do not remember signing up, please take the time to do so again.

### Membership is free so sign up today!

Donations are welcome and encouraged as they help fund neighborhood projects, newsletter, parties & website.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ unit \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Donation \_\_\_\_ \$25 \_\_\_\_ \$50 \_\_\_\_ \$100 \_\_\_\_ other

Please make your check payable to LPNA and mail to: LPNA, P.O. Box 1485, Sarasota, FL 34230

### Interested in volunteering? We need your help to get things done.

Please check any areas of interest and we will contact you to get involved.

- Historic Preservation     City Government     Social Events     Newsletter  
 Crime Watch     Membership

## The State of Real Estate

There are currently 6 properties listed for sale in Laurel Park, not including the Orange Club project.

651 Ohio Place	List Price	\$699,000
1830 Hawkins Court	List Price	\$849,000
641 Rawls Avenue	List Price	\$995,900
1655 Alderman Street	List Price	\$1,169,700
1679 Alderman Street	List Price	\$1,235,000
1724 Cherry Lane	List Price	\$1,315,000

There are presently 3 properties with pending sales

1849 Laurel Street	List Price	\$475,000
542 Ohio Place	List Price	\$1,050,000
1636-1638 Laurel Street	List Price	\$1,200,000

18 properties have sold since Sept. 1, 2015

1720 Morrill Street #1	Sold Price	\$110,000
1720 Morrill Street #2	Sold Price	\$110,000
1720 Morrill Street #5	Sold Price	\$114,500
1720 Morrill Street #9	Sold Price	\$115,000
1720 Morrill Street #3	Sold Price	\$120,000
1720 Morrill Street #4	Sold Price	\$120,000
1720 Morrill Street #12	Sold Price	\$130,000
654 Lafayette Court	Sold Price	\$205,000
1677 Devonshire Lane	Sold Price	\$300,000
1922 Oak Street	Sold Price	\$306,000
659 Ohio Place	Sold Price	\$430,000
1685 Laurel Street #3	Sold Price	\$465,000
1664 Cherry Lane	Sold Price	\$502,000
512 Madison Court	Sold Price	\$525,000
1669 Oak Street	Sold Price	\$574,500
516 Madison Court	Sold Price	\$712,500
1855 Oak Street	Sold Price	\$970,000

Information provided by Betsy Sublette, Realtor,  
Premier Sotheby's International Realty.  
Source: Sarasota Multiple Listing System

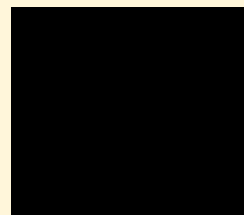
## Laurel Park Residents Helping the Homeless

The following report comes from Laurel Park resident and LPNA Board Member, Daniel Bridinger, who has been spearheading Laurel Park's efforts to aid the homeless population in Sarasota:

Laurel Park has collected \$425.00 to date for the homeless. The donations go towards the Salvation Army, Resurrection House and All Faiths Food Bank.

There were 17 Laurel Park residents who volunteered at All Faiths Food Bank on March 12. We prepared 5,833 meals for the homeless! We will be helping out All Faiths Food Bank once every three months. Contact Dan Bridinger if you're interested. Dan's email is danielbridinger@gmail.com or you can reach him at 941.544.5175.

Special thanks to Laurel Park residents, Bob and Teresa Stone, of Minuteman Press located at 1746 10th Way A2, Sarasota, FL 34236, Phone:(941) 955-5070. They are registered with the City as an authorized Neighborhood Association Newsletter printer and they do a great job with printing our newsletters.



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## LPNA Resources

**BOARD MEMBERS:** Betsy Sublette, Alice Sundstrom, Dan Bridinger, Kelly Franklin, Marwan Khammash, Jude Levy, James Lingley, Meg Spinella.

**THE BULLETIN BOARD:** The LPNA manages the bulletin board located at the entrance of Laurel Park. On the board you will find the most current:

- LPNA Meeting Minutes
- Laurel Park News (you can remove newsletter to read it but please return it when finished)
- Meeting and event announcements
- Important phone numbers
- Miscellaneous classifieds!

*Officers will be elected at the next LPNA Board Meeting in May.*

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## LPNA 2016 Membership List

Many thanks to our new and renewing members, listed below. If you have not yet joined or renewed, please send in the attached membership form. We appreciate contributions, but it is not required.

Patricia Agnew  
 Don & Cathy Baillie  
 Bob Bahm & Jan Baker  
 Walter Baldwin  
 Tom & Margaret Ballard  
 Carol Bradley  
 Dan Bridinger  
 Erika Brigham  
 John Buhsmer  
 Ray Burnett  
 Carol Butera & Par Reid  
 Jamie & Philip Carey  
 Leon & Alice Celestino  
 Bill & Ellen Cornelius, Jr.  
 Julie Cotton  
 John & Deborah Dart  
 Dr. Mary Davenport  
 Patricia Deal  
 Rene &  
 Margaret Desjardins  
 Pamela Diamond  
 Faith Fippinger  
 Mike &  
 Stephanie Fischer

Robert & Stacy Fletcher  
 Kelly Franklin &  
 Ron Kashden  
 G.M.N. Corp  
 Mary & Jim  
 Guidotti-Barbera  
 Susan Haas &  
 Jerry Godsil  
 Yvonne & Albert Hafner  
 Dan Harris &  
 Maureen E. Mulvihill  
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 Rebeca & Chris Jaensch  
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 Kasy & Joe Kane  
 Baird Juckett  
 & Sara Malone  
 Joe & Kasy Kane  
 Marwan  
 & Monika Khammash  
 Lauren Kohl

Jill & Dennis Kowal  
 Alan Kranich  
 Jeannie Kruidenier  
 Anne-Marie &  
 Michael Lang  
 Jude Levy  
 Jim Lingley  
 & Linda Sargent  
 Scylla Liscombe  
 Nancy & Stephen Long  
 Kate Lowman &  
 Tom Carter  
 Debbie & Blaz Lucas  
 Ann & Robert Madden  
 Sara Malone & Baird  
 Juckett  
 Michele Martin  
 Mary Jane  
 McGinty-Underwood  
 Jolie & Brian McInnis  
 Ellen McKeefe  
 Cynthia McMullin  
 Ginger & Peter Mermin  
 Sheril Miller

Jim Miller  
 Spanish Oaks Apts  
 Susan Moseley - Friend  
 Elizabeth Neupert  
 Nancy & Jack Notestein  
 Mikeal An O'Keefe  
 Paul O'Keefe  
 Katherine & Greg Orenic  
 (Friends)  
 Michael Ortiz  
 Ortiz-Kleinberg LLC  
 Ada Perez & Michael  
 Edelstein  
 Juliette Reynolds &  
 William Hasson  
 Nancy Richardson  
 Nancy & Richard Robb  
 Linda Sargent &  
 James Lingley  
 Janice & John Shelton  
 Andrea Silvergleit  
 Barbara Southard &  
 Greg DiBona  
 Meg & Joe Spinelli

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 Malcolm Stevenson  
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 Dr. Ai Streacker  
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 Joan Thompson &  
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# Laurel Park Wins Appeal!

On April 11, after a total of 7½ hours of testimony, rebuttal and cross examination, the City Commission approved the Laurel Park appeal of the Woman's Exchange loading dock (proposed for the intersection of Cherry and Rawls.)

The Woman's Exchange must now decide whether to sue the City, develop a new plan, or look for a new location. At the hearings, the neighborhood presented its concerns, including pedestrian and biker safety, the preservation of parking for nearby residents, and cut through traffic down Cherry Lane. LPNA also submitted an analysis of the code showing that 1) the Woman's Exchange is not required to have a new loading dock in order to expand, and 2) the Exchange failed to meet requirements in the code necessary for approval of the project.

Support from the neighborhood for the LPNA appeal has been very strong. From the start, people turned out in large numbers for the many meetings. They wrote letters and emails to the City, helped with research and contributed to strategic planning. Neighbors have also been very generous in making contributions. We raised almost \$4,000 to pay for appeal fees, travel fees for our planning expert, and other incidental costs.

## The Beginning

The process began two years ago with a Community Meeting where the Woman's Exchange explained its plans. At that time, the proposal involved both a new building and loading zone on Rawls Avenue and a remodeling of the southern wing. That southern remodel meant that the existing loading zone in the Women's Exchange parking lot could no longer be used. From that meeting on, LPNA and many individual neighbors have objected to the loading zone portion of the plan.

Because the proposed southern remodel required adjustments to the code, the project went before the Planning Board. At the beginning of the adjustment request hearing, it was announced that no mention could be made of the "elephant in the room" (the northern parcel and loading zone). One of the Planning Board

members was Chris Gallagher, architect for the project: he recused himself. Another member, Robert Lindsay, did not recuse himself, even though he is the son of Elizabeth Lindsay, co-founder of the Woman's Exchange and President of the Board. Ultimately the Exchange lost on a 2-2 vote: they needed three votes to proceed.

## Northern Building & Loading Zone

Following their loss, the Woman's Exchange resubmitted plans for just the northern building and loading zone. They did not need adjustments for that part of the project, so review was handled administratively by city staff, which ultimately granted a building permit in the fall of 2015. The permit was contingent upon several proffers formulated by the City to limit the number of truck trips per day down Rawls Avenue to a maximum of 12. The proffers also stipulated that no trucks larger than 24' and no cars pulling trailers could use the Rawls Avenue loading area. Ironically, any excess trips and larger vehicles would have to use the old loading zone.

## Appeal to Planning Board

Since the proffers did not ameliorate the safety, parking, and through-traffic concerns raised by residents, the LPNA appealed the approval of the building permit. Because two Planning Board members had close ties to the project, the LPNA requested that the appeal go directly to the City Commission. This request was denied, and LPNA lost at the Planning board on 4-0 vote. (The two Planning Board members who previously supported LPNA had both termed out and been replaced.)

It was always understood that Laurel Park would lose at the Planning Board (admittedly we were hopeful that at least one vote might come our way.) Nevertheless, we believed we had a strong case and knew we would have to appeal to the City Commission. That appeal has now resulted in a 3-2 win for Laurel Park. It is our hope that the Woman's Exchange will develop a new, more creative plan that does not involve a loading zone on Rawls Avenue.

**Commission votes  
FOR Laurel Park**

**Mayor  
Willie Shaw**

**Commissioner  
Shelli Freeland Eddie**

**Commissioner  
Susan Chapman**

**Commission votes  
AGAINST  
Laurel Park**

**Vice-Mayor  
Suzanne Atwell**

**Commissioner  
Liz Alpert**

## Connect with Neighbors via Nextdoor.com

Laurel Park resident Don Baillie is urging residents to get connected via a new social media website and app called **Nextdoor.com** which allows registered users to organize themselves via neighborhood. Laurel Park is already set up on the system and has 35 registered members. The site allows users to communicate with each other, post classified ads, seek recommendations, make announcements, and post events on a calendar. There is a section for posting crime and safety and lost and found information. The site features a map of the neighborhood and shows which neighbors are members.

The site works best when as many neighbors are involved as possible and it makes it easy to invite neighbors (you can



even arrange for the site to send them post-cards).

### To join, do the following:

1. Go to **Nextdoor.com** (or download the app to your phone)
2. Enter your home address and email address
3. Sign up via your Facebook account or through the sign on screen
4. Verify your address via telephone or other method provided
5. Add your contacts and neighbors (if you like, or you can skip)
6. Start using.