

Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

APRIL 16, 2026

Preserving Hollin Hills House by House

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

The key to it all is the consensus of the community," architect John Burns told members of the Hollin Hills community at an April 12 "reveal party" to unveil two new plaques for homes in the historic community. "Consensus is our underlying strength," he added.

Opening the Friends of Hollin Hills event at the Mount Vernon Unitarian Church, Barbara Bogue, president, said the gathering "acknowledges our shared love of Hollin Hills."

In 2013, the U.S. Department of Interior listed the community on the National Register of Historic Places as did the state on the Virginia Landmarks Register. The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors approved the Hollin Hills Historic Overlay District in 2022. At that time, Mount Vernon Supervisor Dan Storck insisted on consensus, Burns said.

Jeff Vandersall, who headed the plaque design committee, explained that the design reflects the mid-century modern homes' "sleek, unadorned, clean lines and simplicity." They chose "white metals" fabricated in brushed stainless steel with etched graphics and lettering using the Neutraface font, rejecting traditional heavy brass or bronze plaques with cast letters.

The design "is reflective of the mid-century modern aesthetic expressed in the work of Charles Goodman," a flyer offers. Goodman was the chief architect of the Hollin Hills houses, choosing open-plan layouts, walls of glass and other innovations.

Sunday's attendees applauded the plaques and made purchases. Homeowners can order one that has a home's address or one without.

Barbara Wade bartended for the 50 attendees. She moved to Hollin Hills in 1950 at age two, left and came back in 1978.

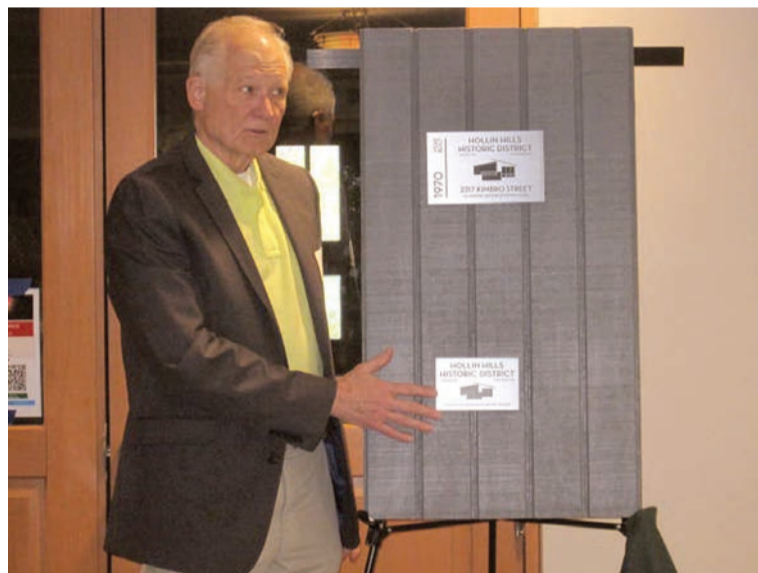
Mike McGill, who came from California to work for the late U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein, moved from Capitol Hill because the architecture "is reminiscent of California," he said.

Origins

The land was "heavily wooded and enigmatic," wrote Goodman. "It was the kind of land homebuilders avoided," he said, accord-



Jeff Vandersall and Barbara Bogue unveiled the two plaques.



Jeff Vandersall headed the design committee and explained the philosophy behind the design.

ing to Hollin Hills, Community of Vision, published in 2000.

In the mid-1940s developer Robert Davenport partnered with Goodman, who was likely influenced by Frank Lloyd Wright, to pioneer a unique community. By 1971, they had built around 450 houses on 326 acres and named it Hollin Hills, for the 18th century plantation house, "Hollin Hall," now owned by MVUC.

Instead of bulldozing the land, building a street grid of right angles and erecting "cookie cutter" houses, the style of that era, the two entrepreneurs worked with the land to respect its natural topography, drainage, slopes and trees. Wright had said, "Let your home appear to grow easily from its site and shape it to sympathize with the surroundings if nature is manifest there, and if not, try and be as quiet, substantial and organic

as she would have been if she had the chance."

The Houses

Among the features that contributed to the historic listings are architecture, community planning and development. The nomination form noted, "Hollin Hills and the collaborative partnership of Goodman and Davenport received national acclaim and international attention as the first planned subdivision to combine novel land planning, modern house and landscape designs and a merchandising plan that required the lots and house designs to be sold separately."

Today there are 463 houses, winding roads, no hard curbs, gutters or sidewalks. Community parks follow streams.

The houses are set back from the streets on irregularly-shaped, one-third to one-half-an-acre lots and



John Burns chronicled the community's efforts to get a federal and state historic designation.



The two plaques available to Hollin Hills homeowners.



Mike McGill, an "architecture buff," liked the plaques and bought one for his home.

sited at angles. Generally, one-level houses are on flat or low-slope lots and two-level houses on steeper lots. "Shaping the structure to fit the site, rather than reshaping and forcing the site to fit the structure, is a defining feature of Hollin Hills," explains the federal listing. Landscape architects Lou Bernard Voight, Eric Paepcke and Dan Kiley designed many of the properties' landscapes to accent the land's natural features.

Peter Martz grew up in Hollin Hills, left for college and returned. "It's a great place to grow up and

a great place to get older. It helps keep you young," he said.

Information

Community Association of Hollin Hills, www.hollin-hills.org

Friends of Hollin Hills, www.FriendsofHollinHills.org

National Register of Historic Places, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/029-5471-Hollin_Hills_HD_2013_NRHP_Final.pdf

Virginia Historic Landmarks Listing, <https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/029-5471/>