

# Vuecrest: Near 30, still thriving

By ALISON WENKE

One of Bellevue's first residential developments is still one of the best.

That's what residents say of Vuecrest, a neighborhood of more than 200 homes northwest of Bellevue Square.

Homeowners are attracted by the park-like landscaping, the cozy, swirly streets, and the "New England village" type architecture — all maintained for nearly 30 years despite the nearness of bustling downtown Bellevue.

Bordered by 22nd and 100th Avenues NE and NE 8th and 12th Streets, Vuecrest is a totally contained community: only three entrances lead in from major arterials. Most of the 200-plus families, nestled inside find their community an ideal one.

"Vuecrest is a prime, prime area," said Gini Wisner, 1973 president of the area's community organization. "It has remained a completely lovely suburb since the beginning."

The planned development, which sprouted from bare farmland in the late 1940s, was the first of its kind in Bellevue.

The Downey family, which owned the land and its original house, sold the property and moved the house to Clyde Mill, where the family remained until a decade ago.

The land, christened Vuecrest, was platted as a residential area. People describe the developer, Jim Barber, as a man with foresight. Planned communities were virtually non-existent at the time, yet he developed what remains one of the best designed, best built communities in the city.

"The area was a trend-setter," said Jim Smith, Vuecrest resident and the City of Bellevue's director of planning. "Candidly, I feel the area is extremely well designed."

The majority of homes are of the late '40's, early '50s vintage: single-level ramblers each

with its own "charm." Homes built later, some of a completely different architectural style, fit in tastefully with the older homes.

Some homes face westward with unobstructed views of the Seattle skyline; others view downtown Bellevue.

The population is decidedly upper middle class. "We've got our celebrities," said Wisner, pointing to the many business leaders and professionals who choose Vuecrest as their home. "But we've got ordinary people, too."

Among the residents are Clyde Mason of the Casual-Aire sportswear store, Marvin Boys, vice-president of Allied Stores, Mel Norquist of the former Norquist and Reilly men's store, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Wilk of Arthur's Bakery, and numerous doctors and other professionals.

Homes vary in size and price; owners range from the young marrieds to the long-retired. A sizable number are original residents.

John and Mary Wilson bought the fourth home in Vuecrest in 1948. "When we moved from Everett, there was very little new housing in Bellevue," Mrs. Wilson recalled. "We didn't have much choice."

Over the years, the Wilsons have thought of moving to a larger home, but each time they opted to remain in the "quiet, comfortable living" of Vuecrest.

Vuecrest was the first community in the area to have underground utilities. That was in 1950. Street lights are uniform and attractive. Park-like dividers, stretching down the main Park Road, are immaculately groomed.

Seven original trees remain in Vuecrest, one of them a beautiful Empress of Asia tree which graces the main entrance.

Vacancies seldom occur and when they do, homes are often sold by word of mouth. Area realtors report only a handful of Vuecrest homes is ever on the market.

Elaine Linkquist, longtime realtor with

William Mundt Realty, said there are always buyers for Vuecrest property.

"Families like it because schools are close," she said. "And people have updated the homes nicely. They've kept up the area."

Wisner, a realtor with John L. Scott, said, "When we moved to Vuecrest seven years ago, there was one home on the market. We bought it."

Jim Smith is also a relative newcomer to Vuecrest. Two-and-a-half years ago, he quickly grabbed one of a couple of homes on the market.

"Because there is community pride, interest and commitment, property values have been maintained and enhanced," Smith contends.

The original homes, when new, sold for about \$14,000 to \$35,000. Today realtors say the homes, when available, go for \$36,000 to \$100,000.

Though Vuecrest borders three busy arterials, all homes along the perimeter front on the residential streets, not on the arterials, making the community closed-in.

"This unique feature increases livability," stressed Smith, who lives on the perimeter.

If the community had been built on normal block streets, the area might see a lot more traffic. As it is, traffic flow is minimal. The curvilinear neighborhood streets discourage motorists from using Vuecrest as a passageway. For those who do, the street network tends to keep auto speeds down.

Surprisingly, few residents complain about noise even along the perimeter.

"Noise complaints in Vuecrest are along busy streets,"

She added, "There is little in the way of security problems. Police patrol frequently because we're close."

The only recurring complaint is occasional trampling of lawns by autos.

Vuecrest is a controlled community. Homeowners are bound by height and architectural restrictions, and are swept into community projects, if not physically, then monetarily.

Membership in the Vuecrest Community Club is mandatory. Annual dues of \$20 (they're going up this year) go largely to maintain common properties, such as the park-like dividers and plant life at entrances.

Known for its colorful Christmas lighting, Vuecrest conducts a yearly contest, with prizes for various categories. Other activities include an annual dinner dance and rental of community trash bins twice a year.

Community by-laws lay down regulations regarding height of structures and trees in Vuecrest. There are landscape controls and a special architecture review committee.

"Anyone who wants to make an addition must see the committee first," explained Wisner.

Though many Vuecrest homes have been remodeled and enlarged, extensively in some cases, the development's architectural style and character have remained intact.

People find it difficult to leave Vuecrest. A few have moved on to bigger and fancier homes in Bellevue. The major reasons for moving are job transfers or an "after the kids are grown" move to smaller quarters.