

Older, more affordable community attracts young couples who get involved

By Rebecca Landwehr
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Shawna and Blaine Olsen have lived on Krameria Street in Denver's Mayfair neighborhood for about six years. Solidly integrated there, they serve on the neighborhood's board of directors and are well acquainted with the character of this 1-square-mile community.

But while preparing for its inaugural Easter egg hunt this spring, Shawna Olsen began to wonder how much her community's demographic was changing. Committee members hid almost 5,000 eggs in the quaint Mayfair Park at 10th Avenue and Jersey Street, uncertain how many kids would attend.

"I was worried that two hours later I'd be walking through the park picking up the leftovers," Olsen said. Kids swarmed the park, and within five minutes the eggs were gone.

The vanished eggs proved what everyone had been thinking — Mayfair is changing.

The Olsens and their 7-month-old daughter, Tessa, typify Mayfair's new blood. Young couples are opting for smaller, older homes in the central city over larger, new construction in the suburbs. These couples like the mature trees and large lots of the classic Mayfair Tudors, without the sticker shock of nearby Park Hill or Hilltop.

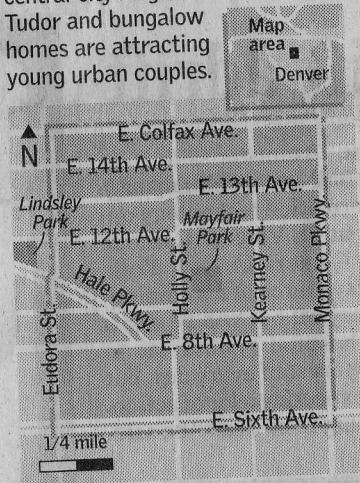
New residents get involved quickly, be it hiding eggs in the park or fighting corporate behemoth McDonald's.

Mayfair gained its footing in the 1940s as a suburban neighborhood attractive to soldiers returning from World War II. Most blocks still claim a few original owners, but demographics are quickly changing. Smaller, more affordable homes on large lots are attracting developers, and scrape-offs are fast becoming a topic of conversation.

"Scrape-offs draw a lot of pros and cons," said Scott Babcock, a five-year resident and president

Mayfair neighborhood

Mayfair grew in the 1940s as returning World War II soldiers settled in the suburbs. Now it's a central-city neighborhood. Mayfair's Tudor and bungalow homes are attracting young urban couples.



of Mayfair Neighbors Inc. "People are glad to see increased interest and support a project if it's done well. But a standard McMansion done in stucco is generally going to raise alarm bells."

Residents — especially younger families — are well aware of the impact development will have on their haven. Galvanized against a new McDonald's drive-through restaurant on Colfax Avenue and Krameria Street, locals banded together in fall 2004 in a group called McMad.

Although McDonald's ultimately prevailed, the fight encouraged residents to visualize future growth and commit their priorities to paper.

This spring, Denver's Office of Community Planning and Development began studying the Mayfair Town Center within an area bordered by Colfax Avenue, Jasmine Street, Locust Street and 13th Avenue. Currently anchored by grocers

All about Mayfair

Where it is: Bounded by Colfax Avenue on the north, Monaco Parkway on the east, Sixth Avenue on the south and Eudora Street on the west.

Who lives here: A mix of young families and longtime residents; many are original owners of 1940s homes.

Price per square foot: 2004: \$216 to \$262; 2005: \$241 to \$300.

Main attractions: Strong community with involved neighbors; mature landscaping; larger lots; wide streets; classic Tudor and brick bungalow homes.

Common complaints: Increase in scrape-off development; minor crimes such as graffiti and car break-ins.

Schools: Palmer Elementary School, Hill Middle School, George Washington High School.

Shopping: Nine-block Mayfair Town Center; nearby Colfax Avenue; retail strip on Jersey Street between Ninth and 10th avenues.

Amenities: Mayfair Park, 10th Avenue and Jersey Street; proposed senior housing tower at Eighth Avenue and Jersey Street.

Sources: Nancy Ricketts, broker, Re/Max of Cherry Creek; Denver Post research

King Soopers and Safeway, the development features single-story retail around massive parking lots.

The assessment was an opportunity for residents to voice concerns about future development. As buildings become available, developers will know what the neighbors will support, hopefully avoiding future tangles with groups like McMad.

"Building what people want makes it easier than going through a parcel-by-parcel negotiation when you don't know the overall vision," said Peter Park, manager of the Office of Community Planning and Development. "We asked the community to help us define the vision."

Residents requested pedestrian access to street-level retail and restaurants, along with residential space on the second and third floors.