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With stadiums so close, the neighbors got game

By Vernon Clark
Inquirer Staff Writer

On the southern fringes of South Philadelphia, residents live with neighbors unlike any others in the city.

These neighbors invite tens of thousands of guests to come out each week, relax and have a good time.

Philadelphia's pro sports stadiums and arenas - Citizens Bank Park, Lincoln Financial Field, the Wachovia Center and the Wachovia Spectrum - may not be the type of neighbors most people would want, but to the folks who live around them, they're a part of life.

Despite the crush of traffic and throng of pedestrians drawn to the area, Carol McGoldrick, who has lived on 10th Street near Bigler for 20 years, said, "We don't have any problems at all."

From her front-yard patio, McGoldrick can see into the upper stands of Citizens Bank Park. And sometimes, when the Phillies play home games, she and family members sit on the patio, watching the game on television and listening to the cheers and boos rising from the stadium.

"We like to hear the fans hooting and hollering," McGoldrick said. "We enjoy it."

While McGoldrick may enjoy the crowd, she and other neighbors of the sports complex have long struggled with the heavy traffic and problems finding parking spaces near their homes.

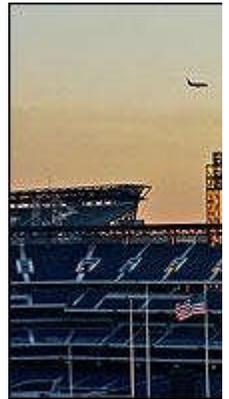
In that neighborhood, you "try to organize your life according to the traffic," said Judy Cerrone, who lives on Juniper Street near Packer Avenue, a stone's throw from where Veterans Stadium stood before its implosion last March.

Cerrone, president of the Sports Complex Community Council, a neighborhood group that focuses on issues related to the stadiums and arenas, said, "We get a schedule of events, games and concerts."

They use that schedule to determine when to leave home and when to return - all to avoid stadium traffic.

A major problem for Cerrone has been the behavior of sports fans who walk though the neighborhood. "The Eagles fans are the most difficult to deal with," Cerrone said, adding

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Citizens Bank Park is the bustle, the stadium outside it's all lit up an

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that fans often leave trash and urinate on people's property.

Resident parking permits have eased much of the parking problem, but some families say not enough permits have been issued.

Catherine Procopio, who has lived on 10th Street near Oregon for 37 years, said she and her friends and family watch fireworks from the Phillies and Eagles games.

"When we sit outside it's all lit up and it's beautiful. I think it's great that we have stadiums here," Procopio said.

Cerrone and other neighbors said that the establishment of the **Sports Complex Special Services District**, which receives its only funding - \$1 million per year - from the sports teams, has helped to improve conditions in the neighborhood.

The district helps with litter cleanup, landscaping and beautification, traffic control and other concerns.

Despite the traffic and the crowds, Procopio described her neighborhood as "beautiful."

"If you're going to complain about every little thing, you don't belong here," she said. "We have a great block, we have good neighbors."

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