

# 4<sup>th</sup> District Update



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September 2007

Councilwoman Graziano

Dear Neighbors,

It's been an exciting and fruitful past three months. We were able to pass a budget that reduced the real estate tax rate by six cents, cutting the Mayor's proposed budget by about four million dollars. We still funded tax relief for the elderly, a cost of living adjustment for our retirees, and all the essential city services. It took many, many meetings and discussions, and I would like to thank all who participated in the process, especially the citizens who came to council meetings and let their voices be heard. Finally we were able to get full funding for seniors on tax relief and fully fund the program for next year.

One issue you will be hearing about this fall is a new ordinance for affordable housing. Council passed an ordinance in January, but with changes in the law made by the General Assembly this year, we are able to create a new program that should be even more effective.

The measure will provide incentives to builders to create more affordable housing throughout the city. The Census Bureau estimates that by next year, the average household income in the Fourth District will be \$91,000, but 39% of the people living in the district will have a household income of less than \$50,000. That makes it very tough for this group to find that first home, especially our young graduates, and our school teachers, public safety workers and other public employees.

Our proposal is designed to energize the private sector by reducing development time and costs and by allowing additional density if those units are affordable.

My proposal is not the single answer to the affordable housing problem. It is a part of a broader picture we are developing with the Housing Authority: reducing the density of public housing and encouraging home ownership, forgivable loans for some city employees who buy and stay in the city, and an affordable housing trust fund to provide additional tools and opportunities for home ownership.

We often don't think of affordable housing as an issue in the Fourth District, and we do have better options than many, but both our young people, our seniors, and many of our public employees are squeezed by the high cost of housing. It's a problem about which I am personally interested, and I am excited that we are making progress here. I also want to thank the Department of Community Development and the Richmond Association of Realtors for their help along the way.

*Kathy*



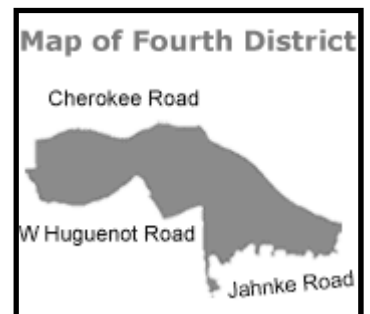
## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

**September 12 , 7:00 pm**

District Meeting

St. Luke Lutheran Church  
at Custis and Chippenham

*See back cover for more  
information.*



## Sunday in the Park with Friends

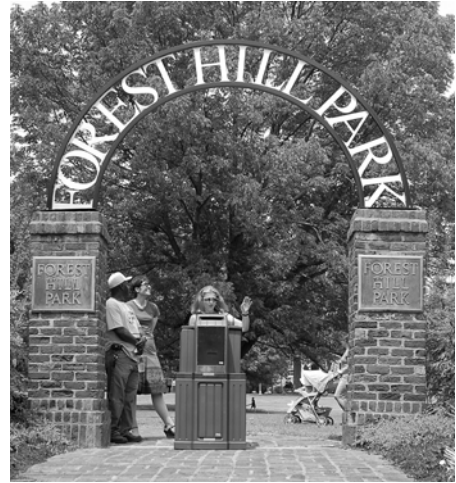
We had a great time on July 15th in Forest Hill Park.



More than 700 people joined us for hot dogs and watermelon, music, games for kids and adults, and historic events around the Stone House.

We must give special recognition to Debra McClane, who served as chair of the Sunday in the Park Event. She was absolutely tireless in putting together a great program, and we all owe her a huge vote of thanks.

The Friends of Forest Hill Park is responsible for the new metal replica sign on Forest Hill Avenue which was paid for from private funds raised and administered by the Friends. Thanks to all the Friends and to all who contributed.



The sign arrived at the last minute and was actually installed as the crowds were gathering. *(continued on next page)*

### TAX ESCROW PROGRAM

If you have paid off your mortgage and own your home, congratulations!

But that also means that once a year you are going to get a big tax bill that must be paid in one lump sum.

There is an alternative, however. Homeowners can enter into an agreement with the City Finance Department and set up an escrow account to pay next year's taxes. There are no fees attached, and the city will even pay a modest amount of interest on the funds deposited. You can pay next year's amount monthly, quarterly or semi-annually. You can vary the amount you pay and skip a month if you wish.

The result is that next year, you will have spread out the bill over as many as ten payments and can avoid the sticker shock when the tax bill comes.

If you are interested, call the Finance Department at 646-5690.

### JAMES RIVER PARK PROGRAMS

**Saturday, Oct. 27** – 7 a.m. to 8 a.m.

Bring your coffee and your camera and meet Ralph White, the James River Park manager, at the Pony Pasture Rapids Park to photograph the late sunrise and discuss environmental issues. This is the last weekend of Daylight Savings Time and the peak of Fall color. To register, call 646-8911. Fee: \$5

**Saturday, Oct. 28** – Noon to 5 p.m.

Interpretive tours of the James River Park's Pump House and the adjoining canals will be offered by Park Manager Ralph White along with occasional moments of classical music. Groups are welcome, and donations will be accepted at the door. The Pump House is located just north of the Boulevard Bridge. The historic gothic Pump House once provided residents of the expanding city with the luxury of running water and served as a site for elegant parties and balls.

## Sunday in the Park with Friends

The Friends of Forest Hill Park presented a plaque in honor of the late Joe Brooks. Councilman Brooks was a huge supporter of the park and provided the funding for the development of the tot lot at the park.



*From left to right: Stephanie Fortmeyer, co-president, Friends of Forest Hill Park; Kathy Graziano, Pauline Brooks.*

### FARMERS MARKET UPDATE

The Farmers Market at 17th Street will be open through Sunday, October 28

The Market is located at 17th and East Main Streets in Shockoe Bottom, part of Richmond's Historic River District. Admission is free to all Market activities and plenty of free parking is available in the Market's two neighboring lots.

Shopping days are open rain or shine.

The Thursday Growers' Market is every Thursday from 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. with new and old favorite vendors to offer up homegrown, handmade, and handcrafted local goods. The Saturday Market runs from 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. includes the same great selection as Thursday and the welcome addition of even more crafts and collectibles. Round out a great weekend by unearthing hidden treasures, furniture, collectible art, books, vinyl LPs, vintage house wares and historic photos at the Sunday Shockoe Flea from 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Don't forget the great satellite market at the William Byrd House in Oregon Hill. Open Tuesday afternoons, it is quickly proving to be a real asset to growers, shoppers and the neighborhood. Congratulations to all who have made this a success

It would take the entire newsletter to individually thank everyone who helped make this event such a success.

We do want to acknowledge the generous support from Dominion and Verizon, Ukrops and Spring Run Bottling Company and Wal-Mart. The civic associations from Westover Hills, Woodland Heights and Forest Hills, and the merchants association from Westover Hills were important partners for us as well.

And last, but certainly not least, thank you to the many volunteers, park staff, the Maymont Foundation staff, police, fire and library staff all helped make this the largest event ever.

### ARREST MADE IN ROBBERIES

Through the spring and summer we had a string of armed robberies in businesses along the Forest Hill corridor. Fortunately no one was injured, but for a small business losing a day's revenues is tough. It is also tough trying to do business in an atmosphere of fear.

Fortunately, an arrest was made, and police tell us the individual has confessed to at least ten robberies in this area since December. Good work by the police in Henrico and Richmond who made the arrest and the connections.

## **MARK YOUR CALENDAR!**

### District Meeting

City Assessor Jim Hester will provide a brief overview of sales prices for real estate in our district and the city, giving us a preview of next year's tax bills.

City Auditor Umesh Dalal will report on a couple of new investigations his office is completing with significant cost savings recommended.

Once again, we asked the Mayor's Office for a presentation on his proposal to raise fees for a stormwater management program. The Mayor's Office said no speaker would be available.

September 12, 7:00 pm  
St. Luke's Lutheran Church  
7757 Chippenham Parkway  
[corner of Custis and Chippenham]

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