



The
Forest Hill
FLYER

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Spring 2026 Issue

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*How a determined
neighbor helped
Forest Hill earn
historic recognition*

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Forest Hill Neighborhood Association meetings are held the third Tuesday of each month at 7 PM

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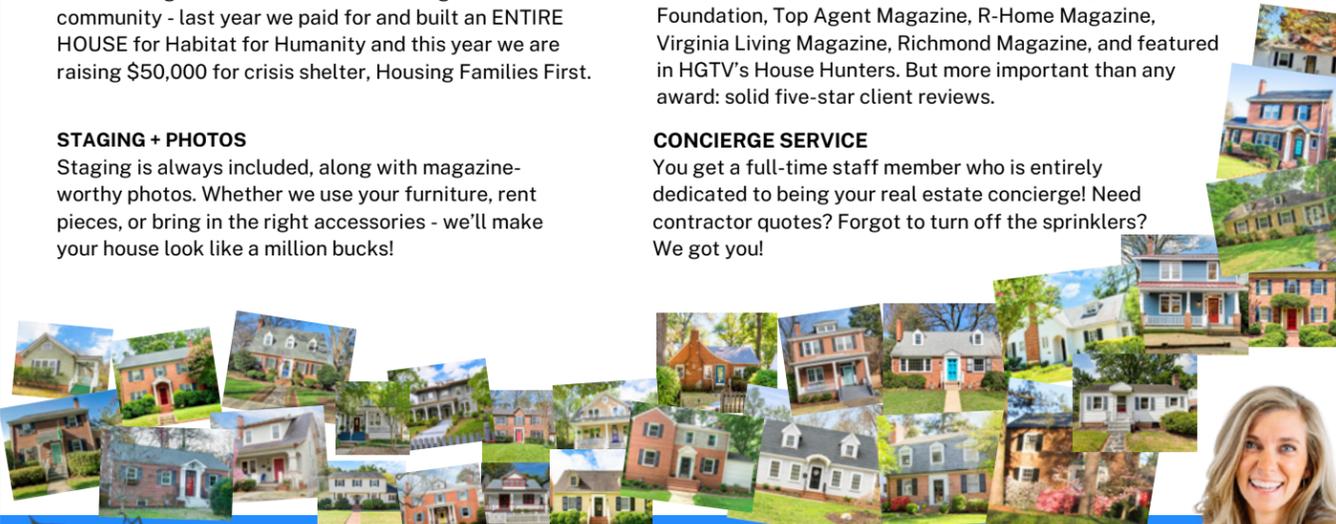
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Good Snowstorms Make Good Neighbors

by FHNA President Greg Somerville

“Good fences make good neighbors,” wrote Robert Frost. With all due respect for the nation’s only 4-time Pulitzer Prize-winning poet, I beg to differ.

Good snowstorms make good neighbors.

We seem to be at our best when the elements are at their worst. We pitch in to shovel the sidewalk. We help push a car out of the ditch. We fetch groceries. We share meals. Our survival instincts know what we so often forget in these polarized, partisan times – we need each other. We’re better together.

As former Presidents of the Forest Hill Neighborhood Association would confirm, this isn’t necessarily an office one aspires to. There is no limo, no reserved parking space. (One less thing I would have needed to shovel this week!) But there is one perk that makes the role very special.

Service activates our senses. Because of this role I see things about Forest Hill and its residents that I never would have seen. I notice things that never would have registered otherwise.

- Amanda just moved down from Northern Virginia in December. She is already flying a Forest Hill flag.
- Stan cares for loved ones on both ends of the family spectrum. On any given day he might be spoon-feeding his granddaughter at breakfast and doing the same for his wife at dinner.
- Kate, a millennial with a demanding medical career, is making time to serve on the Forest Hill Board as well as the 5K Planning Team.
- Molly, despite having a finger in every possible non-profit pie, keeps volunteering to take on more. Enjoy her article in this issue!
- Several neighbors have teamed up to serve as our Code Refresh Working Group and are actively soliciting feedback from Forest Hill residents. Rather than trying to push through their own opinions, they seek to gather and curate the neighborhood’s collective wisdom. It’s a big job.
- On a walk through Forest Hill Park, my granddaughter discovered a stone that had been brightly painted and hidden, like an out-of-season Easter egg. I wish the artist, perhaps a child her own age, could have seen the delight on her face.
- Victoria moved onto 42nd Street less than a year ago. When one of her dogs required emergency medical care following January’s ice storm, neighbors immediately reached out with sympathy for her and her pooch.



Greg (left) standing with fellow 2025 5K volunteers (left to right): Maggie Somerville, Whit Clements, Ronda Ford, Laura Taylor, Stacey Maples

- Mark and John, also on 42nd Street, used their amazing home to host a recent fundraiser for Soundscapes, an organization offering affordable music education and performance opportunities for youth and young adults.
- One of our senior statesmen on Springhill Avenue battled some serious health issues in 2025. It would be understandable if he drew back from community causes to care for himself. Instead, he regularly attends our monthly meetings where he effectively advocates for issues like a thriving tree canopy and safer streets.
- Carolyn, another pillar of the community, invested years of her life to get the Forest Hill Historic District added to the National Register of Historic Places. As new zoning laws threaten to compromise the charm of this 100-year-old neighborhood, Carolyn – though eager to pass the torch to a younger generation – is engaging city officials with direct questions, persuasive data, and grace.

If you have not already found your own way to savor Forest Hill through service, can I make a few simple suggestions?

- Attend a monthly meeting (7 PM on the third Tuesday of each month, Forest Hill Presbyterian Church)
- Sign up for an annual membership (\$15 per year). Your dues help support classic Forest Hill events like Music in the Park and the 43rd Street Festival of the Arts.
- Bring a friend, partner, child, or dog and join in our annual Run For The Hills! 5K.

And if all else fails, grab a shovel and help a neighbor break up the ice. 🌲



**Opening Day April 10th!! Come out and play!
Details & booking at riversideoutfitters.com**

Ready, Set, Run for the Hills! by the 5K Planning Committee

Race around the neighborhood with us on Saturday, March 14th as we Run for the Hills! Our 14th annual 5K welcomes all runners, joggers, and walkers. This fun run is stroller and dog friendly. (dogs, please keep your humans leashed!).

Start time is 9 AM at the Stone House in Forest Hill Park. You can pick up your packet at the Stone House on Friday, the 13th, from 4-6:30 PM or before the race, on Saturday, from 8-9 AM. You can find event and registration details using the QR code or at active.com/richmond-va/running/distance-running-races/run-for-the-hills-5k-2026.

Rather participate from the sidewalk? Cheer the runners along the course or at the finish line, host a dog or human water station along the route, invite friends over to host a cheer station, hang your Forest Hill flag, or volunteer to help out. The more the merrier. Prizes will be awarded to the fastest male, female, and human/dog duo. We also have prizes for the first occupied stroller to cross the finish line, for the fastest younger runners (ages 9 and under, 10-14, and 15-18), and for the most festive cheer station. We're bringing back the best dressed dog contest this year. Enter your canine running buddy to win a prize! 🌲



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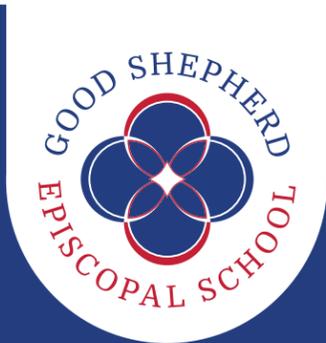


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<https://tinyurl.com/FHNA-FundRequest>

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2026 CALENDAR

Here are the dates for this year's neighborhood events plus a selection of free arts and music happenings around Richmond. Check online for updates or cancellations before attending! Forest Hill Neighborhood Association Meetings are marked in green.

MARCH

- 14 Sat Run for the Hills! 5K Race 9:00 AM Springhill Ave & 41st St
- 17 Tue FHNA Meeting 7:00 PM Forest Hill Presby. Church

APRIL

- 18 Sat Bellevue Porchella 2:00 PM Bellevue, Northside
- 19 Sun Spring Classic Bike Race 12:45 PM Forest Hill Park
- 21 Tue FHNA Meeting 7:00 PM Stone House at Forest Hill Park

MAY

- 2 Sat Arts in the Park 11:00 AM Carillon at Byrd Park
- 3 Sun Arts in the Park 11:00 AM Carillon at Byrd Park
- 10 Sun Music in the Park 6:00 PM Forest Hill Park
- 19 Tue FHNA Meeting 7:00 PM Forest Hill Presby. Church

JUNE

- 6 Sat Neighborhood Yard Sale 9:00 AM Many homes in area
- 12 Sun Music in the Park 6:00 PM Forest Hill Park
- 16 Tue FHNA Meeting 7:00 PM Stone House at Forest Hill Park
- 21 Sun Tiny Porch Concert Series 5:00 PM Woodland Heights

JULY

- 12 Sun Music in the Park 6:00 PM Forest Hill Park
- 19 Sun Tiny Porch Concert Series 5:00 PM Woodland Heights
- 21 Tue FHNA Meeting 7:00 PM Forest Hill Presby. Church

AUGUST

- 1 Sat 804 Day TBD Shockoe Bottom
- 2 Sun Music in the Park 6:00 PM Forest Hill Park
- 16 Sun Tiny Porch Concert Series 5:00 PM Woodland Heights

SEPTEMBER

- 12 Sat 43rd St. Festival of the Arts 10:00 AM 43rd Street Studios
- 13 Sun Music in the Park 3:00 PM Forest Hill Park
- 15 Tue FHNA Meeting 7:00 PM Forest Hill Presby. Church
- 20 Sun Tiny Porch Concert Series 4:00 PM Woodland Heights

OCTOBER

- 4 Sun Music in the Park 3:00 PM Forest Hill Park
- 9 Fri Richmond Folk Festival 6:30 PM Riverfront Amphitheater
- 10 Sat Richmond Folk Festival Noon Riverfront Amphitheater
- 11 Sun Richmond Folk Festival Noon Riverfront Amphitheater
- 18 Sun Tiny Porch Concert Series 5:00 PM Woodland Heights
- 20 Tue FHNA Meeting 7:00 PM Forest Hill Presby. Church

NOVEMBER

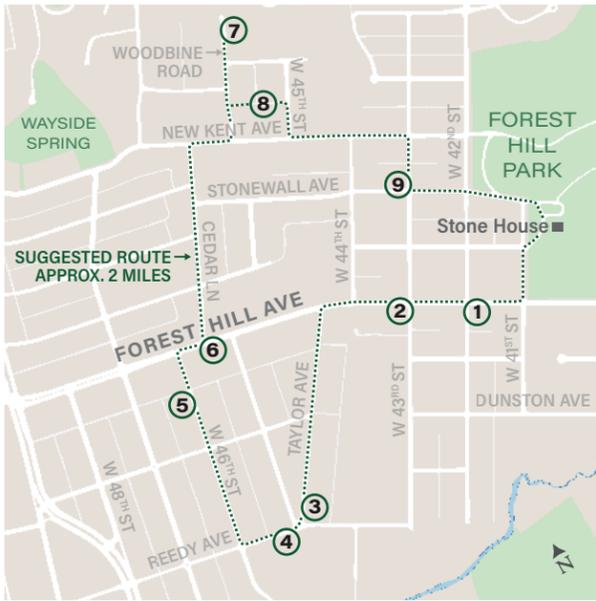
- 14 Sat Richmond Marathon 7:00 AM Along Forest Hill Avenue
- 17 Tue FHNA Meeting 7:00 PM Forest Hill Presby. Church

DECEMBER

- 15 Tue FHNA Holiday Party 6:00 PM Gramophone Winery

Music in the Park Rain Dates: Jul. 19; Aug. 9 or 16; Sept. 27
Tiny Porch Concert Series: Locations in Woodland Heights to be announced

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SELF-GUIDED ARCHITECTURE TOUR

Forest Hill's variety in architecture styles was a key factor in establishing the Historic District. All descriptions below are adapted from the nomination form for the district, which can be viewed online at dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/127-6027.

- 1 **4110 Forest Hill Avenue** (Year of construction: 1890)
This house is one of the earliest to be built along Forest Hill Avenue. It is a large and prominent example of the many Queen Anne-style dwellings in the district.
- 2 **4300 Forest Hill Avenue** (1900)
This traditional Colonial Revival house was built by members of the Netherwood family who owned quarries at the north end of 42nd Street. The house incorporates several granite details.
- 3 **1003 Taylor Avenue** (1922)
This unique house is a Craftsman surrounded by Colonial Revival houses. Note the beefy columns on the porch.
- 4 **4500 Reedy Ave** (1925)
This Dutch Colonial Revival-style house with an emerald-green, barrel-tiled roof was erected by a concrete manufacturer who wanted to show that "nice homes" could be built of concrete.
- 5 **1206 W 46th Street** (1937)
Of the Colonial Revival styles, the Spanish variety is rare in Richmond. This house is features smooth stucco walls and a flat roof that is concealed behind a crenulated parapet.
- 6 **4506 Forest Hill Avenue** (1928)
This example of an American Foursquare house has striking brick walls laid in Flemish bond with deep blue-glazed headers.
- 7 **1905 Woodbine Road** (1959)
Only a handful of homes in Forest Hill were made in a Modern style. This home was designed by George Matsomuto, a renowned Modernist architect.
- 8 **In alley north of 4505 New Kent Avenue** (Year Unknown)
Look for an unusual stone structure in the alley that is made of roughly cut granite. This building may have been used for quarrying long before any of the houses were built in this area.
- 9 **4301 Stonewall Avenue** (1927)
This pink house is one of several Craftsmen Bungalows in Forest Hill. It features a repetition of three clipped gables.

A Champion for Forest Hill History

by Molly McKinley

When folks talk about what makes Forest Hill special, you'll often hear about what is nearby. They'll mention the park, the river, or great places to get a beer or an egg & cheese croissant. But it's more than just proximity to nice things that make this corner of South Richmond special. Did you know that in 2012, Forest Hill was designated as a Historic District and listed on both the State and National Registers of Historic Places? This recognition didn't happen by accident, or on the whim of someone at the Department of Historic Resources (the agency that oversees the register). It was earned through a multiyear campaign by a determined group of neighbors. This is another aspect of the neighborhood that makes it special. We are lucky to have many caring residents who dig in, who build community, who consider the past and the future of their neighborhoods. Carolyn Paulette is one such neighbor whom I had the pleasure of interviewing for this article.

Carolyn is a long-time Forest Hill resident, area educator, world-traveler, "crazy cat lady" (in her own words), and an encyclopedia of Forest Hill History. Carolyn lived in Forest Hill with her parents in the 1950s, attended Westhampton College (now part of the University of Richmond) and embarked on her career as an English teacher. She later bought her home in Forest Hill in the 1970s. She has borne witness to the families that likewise made Forest Hill their home both recently and across generations. She expresses appreciation for the variety of residents of the area, and she continues to revel in her love of place from her home on Forest Hill Avenue where she gardens, writes poetry, and keeps her ear to the ground for community events.

The idea for the Historic District originated at a meeting Carolyn attended in 2009 with Rachel Flynn, the City's former Director of Community Planning (she resigned in 2011). It was Flynn who suggested that the neighborhood should pursue a Historic District designation. To receive the designation, the onus was on the group of seventeen Forest Hill residents (Carolyn among them) who stepped up to raise funds, to get on innumerable neighborhood association meeting agendas, and to do the work! That work included research into the neighborhood's "period of significance" from 1895-1961. A number of the original committee members still live in Forest Hill: Sue Cline, Shannon Taylor, Mary Godsey, Pat and Dwight Wood, Joy Glass, Bill Luebke, and Lee Shewmake.

The group investigated land uses and the gravesites near what we currently call the Stone House in Forest Hill Park. Once a plantation, with cemeteries dedicated both to its

owners and enslaved residents, the parklands where we take our kids and dogs to play have a multi-faceted history. The team of seventeen learned about how the "Southside Development Company," created an amusement park at the end of the trolley line in part as a lure to potential residents to "build homes in the pretty forest." And get this! Carolyn even tells of a pet bear who lived at the park who indeed managed one successful escape circa 1885.

The history of the plantation to transportation hub to amusement park paired with the area's architectural diversity make our community a delight to delve into as well as explore. Forest Hill is home to businesses, worship spaces, public places, secondary streets, busy thoroughfares, creeks, trails, abandoned quarries and an array of residential architectural types. Strolling our streets, you can view homes representative of many architectural styles including Queen Ann, Tudor Revival, Spanish Colonial, bungalows, and practical ranches. As I explore the streets of our neighborhood, I appreciate the diversity of historic designs displayed among the 1,106 buildings officially recognized as contributing to our historic district. As a homeowner, I appreciate when my contractor remarks on how cozy and inviting he finds our setting. This is a good place to be.

Like all places, change is a constant. We Forest Hillers live here as a result of the changes over the last few centuries — Richmond grew as a city, the trolley brought folks to the area in increasing numbers, motor vehicles replaced trolley cars, and many businesses have come and gone. The city's current master plan, Richmond 300 (adopted in 2023), calls for a new zoning ordinance that would both "preserve the historical urban fabric" and "encourage the development of housing options throughout the city". Likewise, the intent of the Forest Hill Historic District is to keep the historic character of the area while permitting thoughtful changes. However, the designation is not legally binding; structures can be changed, added, and removed. National and State Historic Districts may serve to highlight an area's historic character, but they cannot give a true "check" on change. This concerns Carolyn who would like to see updated zoning give more consideration to historic places. She, among others, feels that the presence of a historic district should serve to retain the historic features of the community by protecting against too many changes that alter the existing architecture and feel of Forest Hill.



During our interview, Carolyn waxed poetic about her love of her historic home and the joy that she gleans from growing everything from Black Eyed Susans to tomatoes. Carolyn loves her 1925 Colonial Revival/ Craftsman style home which turned 100 last year (just 15 years older than Carolyn). She hopes it will see many more birthdays! Moreover, she considers the Stone House a very special place that has served many uses and would love to see it used as a museum of sorts. She is also the "go-to" person if you would like a historic district plaque for your own home or yard (see cover image). If you are interested, you can reach out to Carolyn at cmp4312@yahoo.com to

place an order (the cost excluding shipping is approximately \$210). Summarizing her experience with the designation, Carolyn lit up as she spoke to her love of Forest Hill, particularly recollecting when the Historic District was finally approved in 2012. Channel 8 news even ran a piece on the achievement. It was a big deal! You can read the full documentation of our Historic District designation online at dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/127-6027/.

The next time you amble through our neighborhood or slow down for the speed humps along Forest Hill Ave itself, keep your eyes peeled for the Historic Designation and FHNA signs. Pause if time permits and consider the human effort behind the historic district designation itself. Take a moment also to celebrate the sentiments of what is special and unique about Forest Hill. As a relative newcomer to the area, it is an honor to learn more about this community that we share. Ours is a community worth celebrating and appreciating for the history that it holds and the future memories, dreams, and community-connections that it promises. I would like to thank Carolyn and the many dedicated neighbors who worked to highlight this special place. As we move into the future, may we appreciate our special place while thoughtfully changing with the times and most importantly, honoring each other as neighbors, business owners, and friends. 🌲

Editor's note on Code Refresh:

The topic of zoning has been at the forefront of several recent Forest Hill Neighborhood Association meetings as the city works on Code Refresh, an ongoing process to update zoning in response to Richmond 300. At the time of writing, a third draft of the plan is expected to be released soon, and you can still send comments and get information on upcoming public meetings online at rva.gov/planning-development-review/code-refresh.

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Wesley Hedgepeth's Update from the School Board

Greetings Neighbors!

I hope everyone is having an excellent 2026. Below you will find some recent updates in Richmond Public Schools.

Accreditation

First and foremost, all 4th District schools are either fully or conditionally accredited. Congratulations to J.B. Fisher Elementary School, Southampton Elementary School, Westover Hills Elementary School, and Huguenot High School for achieving full accreditation. Lucille Brown Middle School is conditionally accredited and is making strong gains. I have no doubt we will see them gain full accreditation in the near future!

Evaluation Committee

The School Board Evaluation Committee met with Superintendent Kamras in January to discuss expectations for his midyear formative review which will occur in February. At that meeting, we will discuss his goals and provide him with feedback. Depending on that conversation, his goals may or may not shift. The Committee also updated its Evaluation Timeline for 2026.

Policy Committee

I am honored to be named the new Policy Committee Chair as of our January 5 meeting. The following policies were approved at our next meeting on January 6:

Policy 6-2.7 Energy Management

Better aligns the division's energy management policies with the City of Richmond's policy, including the adoption of energy use standards and setpoints, and a commitment to sustainable practices through renewable energy and resilient buildings.

Policy 7-7.6 Holidays (New)

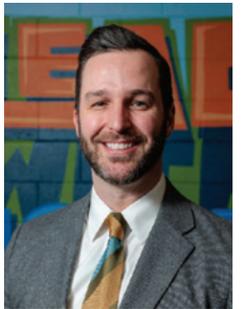
Adds Indigenous Peoples' Day as a division holiday on the second Monday in October.

Policy 8-1.40 Observations Of Students By Parents, Guardians, And Caregivers (New)

Creates new policy to establish clear requirements and procedures for the observation of students in classrooms by parents, caregivers, and guardians, and for other specific and compelling reasons.

In December, the committee received a first draft of the district's new AI policy. After some recommended edits were made, the policy will be reintroduced to the committee at our February 17 meeting.

We recently received a new legal opinion that will allow our committees to meet virtually, so we are drafting a new virtual committee meeting policy. Once drafted, that policy will be placed on an upcoming committee meeting agenda. I am particularly proud of this change because it will allow for easier public access to these meetings.



Wesley Hedgepeth
4th District School Board Rep.

6th District Vacancy

On February 2, the board appointed Ms. Anne Holton to fill the vacated 6th District seat. This is an interim appointment which will conclude at the end of 2027 and there will be a special election this November to fill the vacancy for the remaining two years of the unexpired term. The full appointment process can be found at the RPS website.

Parent-Teacher Advisory Council

The 4th District Parent-Teacher Advisory Council (PTAC) is open to all parents and teachers within our district, providing a platform for sharing valuable insights and helping shape the future of our scholars' education. We meet once a month, mostly in-person and always including a virtual option. So, why not take this opportunity to connect with fellow parents and educators? Together, we can create a nurturing and inclusive community that supports the educational journey of all our scholars.

PATC Meeting Stats

Date	Location	Participants
Sept. 25, 2025	Southampton E.S. *	9
Oct. 22, 2025	J.B. Fisher E.S.*	10
Nov. 24, 2025	Westover Hills E.S.*	22
Jan. 24, 2026	Virtual only	22

*Hybrid meeting

Join us in making a difference—your voice matters! It is never too late to join. The next meeting will be held at Lucille M. Brown Middle School on February 24, 2026 at 5:30 PM. Email me if you're interested!

Sincerely,

Wesley

**School Board
Contact Info**

Wesley Hedgepeth
whedgepeth@rvaschools.net
(804) 901-6671

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Sarah Abubaker's Update from City Council

Greetings Forest Hill friends and neighbors!

This time last year, I shared how honored I was to write my first note in the Forest Hill Flyer as your City Councilmember. I'm just as honored, and just as grateful, to be writing to you again as I begin my second year in office.

This past year has brought its share of challenges, but one thing has remained constant: Forest Hill is a vibrant, engaged community that keeps me grounded and focused as I advocate for all neighborhoods at City Hall. I'm proud to call this neighborhood home.

By the time you're reading this, January's ice storm will finally be behind us. But I want to acknowledge how difficult it was. Many neighbors were unable to leave their homes for days. Some of our elderly residents came dangerously close to running out of heating oil. Our children were out of school for more than a week. It was stressful and, if you had to venture out, it could be scary.

While the combination of heavy ice and prolonged frigid temperatures made this storm highly unusual, we still must learn from it. Mayor Avula and City Administration have committed to conducting a full review of the City's response and issuing an after-action report. I will share that report once it is available and will continue pushing to ensure we are better prepared moving forward.

Looking ahead, budget season is underway. On March 11, the Mayor will formally introduce his proposed Fiscal Year 2027 budget (which begins July 1). Once it is released, I will be reviewing it closely to ensure we are prioritizing strong investments in our schools, critical infrastructure throughout the city, and the reliable delivery of core City services. I'll keep you updated in future newsletters and in my weekly Fourth District Friday, as the process unfolds.

In March, I will also be advancing my signature legislation to create a real estate tax deferral program. The ordinance was introduced in January and is scheduled for a Finance Committee hearing in March, with a potential final vote shortly thereafter.

In short, the proposal would allow homeowners to defer paying the portion of their real estate tax bill that exceeds 105% of the previous year's bill, at 2% interest, until the property transfers to a new owner. This is not a one-size-fits-all solution, and it won't be right for everyone. But it

is an additional tool that gives property owners more flexibility in managing rising housing costs. I will continue fighting for meaningful, permanent tax solutions — but if this program helps even one Richmond homeowner stay financially stable in their home, it will be worth it.

Finally, construction on the long-awaited Jahnke Road Improvement Project is scheduled to begin the week of February 23. This project will significantly improve safety along the corridor for Westover Hills Elementary students, families, staff, and all who use the roadway. It is a major, multi-year investment, with completion anticipated in Spring 2028, and I'm glad to see it moving forward.

As always, my office is here to help with any City-related concerns or questions. Please don't hesitate to reach out at sarah.abubaker@rva.gov or timmy.siverd@rva.gov. And if you're not already receiving my weekly Fourth District Friday newsletter, let us know and we'll be happy to add you.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve you, and for being such an engaged and caring community.

With Fourth District, and Forest Hill love,
Sarah



Sarah Abubaker
4th District Council Member



Above: Rendering of Typical Section of Jahnke Road from Dept. of Public Works.

Highlights of the upcoming project from a Feb. 10, 2026 DPW press release:
Roadway: Two 11-foot travel lanes with a center median, dedicated left-turn lanes, and a new curb-and-gutter drainage system. **Pathways:** An 8-foot multi-use path on the north side and a 5-foot sidewalk on the south side will be constructed.
Streetscape: Landscaping, and safety improvements at the rail crossing shall be installed. **Traffic Control:** A new signal will be installed at Forestview School Drive with automated crossing gates at the CSXT rail line. **Utilities:** City water, gas service lines are also included as well as underground storm sewer.



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City Council Contact Info

Sarah Abubaker
sarah.abubaker@rva.gov

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Office number: 804-646-5646

Scan to sign up for Fourth District Fridays, Sarah's weekly email newsletter ▶



Flashback: Origins of Forest Hill Park

While putting together this issue of the *Flyer* and editing the story of how our historic district came to be, I was keen to look back at some early images of the neighborhood. Luckily, there is a sizable collection of photographs of Forest Hill Park during its streetcar and amusement park era held at The Valentine.

—Riley Champine, Editor



This photograph, presumed to be from the 1890s, looks east from West 41st Street at the trolley terminus in Forest Hill Park. The streetcar line was built in 1889 as part of a speculative real estate venture by the New York-based South Side Land and Improvement Company. The developer sold lots at the outskirts of Richmond on former plantation lands, where enslaved labor harvested crops and quarried granite. The existing residence on the Boscobel property, which we now refer to as the Stone House (building at right), was modified with a wooden porch and a bell tower and served as a streetcar station.

Source: Cook Photograph Collection. 4710/PHC0047. The Valentine.



To entice Richmonders to make the roughly 3-mile journey from downtown, amusements like the "Dip The Dip" rollercoaster (shown above) were added near the trolley terminus. The amusement park fell into disrepair during the Great Depression and was removed in 1932. Forest Hill Park was then transferred to the city, which restored the Stone House, removing the porch and bell tower.

Source: Cook Photograph Collection. 4821/PHC0047. The Valentine.



The image above shows a 1919 Sanborn Fire Insurance map of South Richmond overlaid on top of an aerial image of the park from 2025. The hand-drawn Sanborn map depicts the layout of the amusement park structures and their materials — yellow for wooden structures, and blue for stone. The Stone House is the building at the bottom left labeled Penny Arcade.

Sources: Library of Congress; Virginia Geographic Information Network

Forest Hill Neighborhood Association 2026

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Join the FHNA and become part of a friendly and active group that works for the good of the neighborhood! Meetings are held the third Tuesday of each month at 7pm and are usually at Forest Hill Presbyterian Church.

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