

September 1, 2025

## **A NOTE FROM THE VIRGINIA-HIGHLAND CIVIC ASSOCIATION BOARD**

In a time of national challenges, it is both rewarding and inspiring to contribute to positive, local progress here in Virginia-Highland. We are fortunate to live in a neighborhood filled with smart, passionate, and engaged people. Thank you to all who volunteered with VHCA committees and work groups this year—your efforts make our community stronger.

Our Board has embraced a “big tent” philosophy, welcoming all neighbors to participate in events, clean-ups, and conversations. Each meeting begins with a statement underscoring our values:

*“Welcome, everyone, to the Virginia-Highland Civic Association meeting. As we gather here, we’d like to first express our gratitude to each of you for joining. This association has proudly served our neighborhood for over 50 years, powered entirely by dedicated volunteers who give their time and energy to help shape a stronger, more vibrant community. Together, we work on initiatives that support our parks, guide thoughtful planning, and bring neighbors together in meaningful ways.*

*We know that Virginia-Highland is home to a diverse group of voices, and with that comes a wide range of perspectives. While we may not always agree, we hope that everyone feels comfortable to share their thoughts in a way that is both respectful and neighborly. Disagreement is ok. Disrespect will not be tolerated. Let’s continue to build on our legacy by focusing on what connects us and working together for the future of our community. Thank you for being here and for being part of this ongoing work.”*

## **CELEBRATING OUR COMMUNITY**

### **Fire House #19 Centennial Celebration**

In October, VHCA partnered with Atlanta Fire & Rescue to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Fire Station #19—the city’s oldest continuously operating firehouse. Tours, puppet shows, children’s readings, and even Dalmatian demonstrations honored the station’s history and role in our neighborhood.

### **Tour of Homes**

Also in October, we welcomed visitors into seven architecturally diverse homes during the annual Tour of Homes. Thanks to our generous hosts and volunteers, the event raised nearly \$25,000 to support neighborhood projects.

### **Neighborhood Gatherings & Holiday Lights Contest**

We ended the year with a lively gathering at Neighbor’s Restaurant, where more than 100 neighbors connected and explored new ways to get involved. This winter also marked our first Holiday Lights Contest, with creative displays across VaHi and community judges awarding winners in five festive categories.

### **Summerfest**

A remarkable committee launched a full weekend of activities the first weekend of June 2026. For four decades, Summerfest has pulled together our community to enjoy art, music, 5K, KidsFest and great food. The music selection this year was particularly strong on the main stage, and we enjoyed people from across the state coming to celebrate in John Howell Park. The 5K enjoyed about 750 runners – and walkers – and the Tot Trot celebrated our youngest athletes. The Friday Night neighbor event at the corner of Virginia and North Highland was great community gathering to celebrate our neighborhood and Murphy’s milestone anniversary.

Unfortunately, rain on Saturday night limited our fundraising potential, but neighbors had a great time the rest of the weekend. In 2026 we will need to make some hard decisions, as the cost of festivals (and associated liability) has accelerated. We are seeing that now with other community festivals, such as Dogwood Festival, as well. We will need strong neighbor input for this!

### **VA-HI Yard Sale**

In May 2025, our inaugural neighborhood yard sale, with more than 50 participating homes, brought neighbors, the library and business, and bargain-hunters together. The best part of a Yard Sale is getting out to talk to your neighbors, after all. Stay tuned for the dates for 2026!

## **SUPPORTING OUR PARKS AND SCHOOLS**

### **Parks & Cleanups**

Monthly clean-ups kept John Howell Park, North Highland Park, and Orme Park thriving, thanks to dedicated volunteers. North Highland Park—owned by VHCA—remains a unique asset but also a financial responsibility, requiring maintenance, insurance, and utilities. Community input will be vital as we explore long-term sustainability.

### **John Howell Park Renovation**

A new nonprofit, Friends of John Howell Park, has been established to support a major renovation effort and ensure donations are tax-deductible. Renovations are estimated to cost \$1.5–\$1.75 million—our most ambitious project yet.

We secured a \$100,000 grant from Park Pride and a \$300,000 commitment from the City of Atlanta’s Moving Atlanta Forward fund to support Phase One of park improvements, anticipated for 2026.

In the meantime, in addition to our regular park cleanups, VHCA volunteers rolled up their sleeves and restored eleven park benches — thanks to a partnership with the city to procure materials

### **Education**

Our back-to-school tradition continued with Propel ATL, offering David T Howard Middle school students a bike safety class to promote independence and safe navigation of VaHi’s streets and the BeltLine. The Education Committee also maintained strong ties with Atlanta Public Schools and is actively participating in the APS Comprehensive Long-Range Facilities Plan.

## ADVOCACY + PLANNING

### Organizational Alignment

To strengthen fundraising capacity, VHCA is proposing to consolidate operations under the 501(c)(3) nonprofit, the Virginia-Highland Conservation League. This will be brought to membership for a vote at the September 8th annual meeting.

### Transportation & Safety

The Transportation Committee partnered with Midtown Neighbors Association to pilot a Virginia Avenue bike path connecting with Monroe, with construction expected in September 2025. This path will be launched and VHCA will continue to monitor and gather feedback from neighbors.

VHCA also works closely with APD, with Lt. Carroll providing consistent updates and rapid response to neighborhood concerns.

### Planning & Development

Our Planning Committee assisted neighbors with approximately 30 variance requests, worked to address development challenges, and engaged in major projects:

- **Amsterdam Walk:** More than two years of community engagement activity can be found on VAHI.org. The final site plan approved by City Council in April 2025 for Amsterdam Walk ended up being different than what the 2023-2024 VHCA Board voted to conditionally support. We expect to see more detail from the developer, Portman, in about 18-24 months on their timeline and phases for the project.
- **Pool Proposal:** Following extensive neighbor input, VHCA withheld support for the Virginia-Highland Pool Assoc-Atlanta Public Schools negotiated agreement at the APS owned Field of Dreams parcel. Detailed project plans and information were not provided, as would be required for any large-scale project presented to VHCA.
- **Monroe Complete Streets:** Councilmember Wan indicates this project is moving forward. We remain in regular dialogue with him to advocate for safety and community transportation priorities.
- **Atkins Park Commercial Node:** We are encouraged that some ownership changes have occurred on some of the properties in this southernmost VA-HI commercial district along N. Highland Avenue. We believe some investment in the vacant properties is more likely now. We continue to stay in communication with the Virginia-Highland District (Business Association) for additional updates.
- **Selig Property:** Ponce de Leon Avenue. We do expect to see a development proposal from Selig for their Ponce de Leon Ave property between Bonaventure and Ponce Place later this year or early next. The rezoning that took place on adjacent properties by Portman in prior years is helpful guideline on the type of development conditions we will expect for this project.
- **Zoning 2.0.** - The City continues to take feedback on the rewrite of the 1982 Zoning Code. This action will be taken up the next City Council in 2026. We are continuing to monitor and provide feedback.

## **OUR FUTURE**

Virginia-Highland remains one of Atlanta's most vibrant neighborhoods, thanks to the commitment of our volunteers and donors. VHCA is entirely volunteer-run and funded by community contributions. Each year, it costs approximately \$45,000 just to sustain operations—covering insurance, communications, park maintenance, and smaller events—on top of the significant fundraising goals we have for the John Howell Park renovation.

We close this term with \$156,900 in reserves plus North Highland Park as our primary asset, at the end of July 2025. Our net income was effectively break-even at \$6,822 as of the end of July. While proud of our progress, we know there is more to do. We invite you to get involved: volunteer at an event, join a committee, serve on the Board, or contribute financially. Every gift of time or resources strengthens our community. Together, with partner organizations like Virginia-Highland District and the Virginia-Highland Security Patrol, we are committed to building a safe, connected, and thriving future.

Thank you for making Virginia-Highland an extraordinary place to call home.

With gratitude,  
The 2024–2025 VHCA Board

## **ABOUT VHCA**

The Virginia-Highland Civic Association (VHCA) plays a crucial role in enhancing the quality of life in the Virginia-Highland neighborhood. As a dedicated group of volunteers, the VHCA actively engages with the intricacies of city planning and policy issues, ensuring that residents' voices are heard and represented. By vigilantly monitoring issues that affect VAHI and participating in discussions and decisions that affect our community, the VHCA helps safeguard the character and vibrancy of our neighborhood, promoting a connected and informed community environment. This proactive involvement is crucial for guiding development and maintaining the unique charm of Virginia-Highland.