



# Virginia-Highland VOICE

A publication of the Virginia-Highland Civic Association August 2001

## VHCA CALENDAR

### Annual Meeting:

**Monday, September 5; 7:30pm**  
Inman Middle School Auditorium  
Agenda: Annual Donations, VHCA Board Elections, By-law Amendments, Community Service Awards

### General Meetings:

**October 3; 7:30pm**  
**November 7; 7:30pm**  
Ponce de Leon Branch Library

### Board Meetings:

**August 29; 7:30pm**, Library  
**October 1; 7:30pm**, YWCA  
**November 5; 7:30pm**, YWCA

### Planning Committee:

**August 29; 7:30pm**  
**September 26; 7:30pm**  
**October 31; 7:30pm**  
Ponce de Leon Branch Library

### PEDS Walks:

**August 20; 6:30pm**  
**September 17; 6:30pm**  
**October 15; 6:30pm**  
Highland CVS parking lot

### Neighborhood Planning Unit (NPU-F):

**August 20; 7:30pm**  
**September 17; 7:30pm**  
**October 15; 7:30pm**  
Morningside Presbyterian Church

Location of meetings subject to change.

Visit our website at  
[www.vahi.org](http://www.vahi.org)

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## VHCA ANNUAL MEETING

The 2001 Annual Meeting of the Virginia-Highland Civic Association (VHCA) will be held Wednesday, September 5, 20001, at 7:30pm at Inman Middle School in the Auditorium. The agenda for the Annual Meeting includes announcement of annual donations made from the proceeds of Summerfest, the election of the VHCA Board of Directors, discussion of and voting on any proposed amendments to the Bylaws, and community service awards. Political candidates for the upcoming November elections will also be invited so that we can all have a chance to meet them before and after the meeting.

## JULES IS A JEWEL!

*Conne Ward-Cameron*

She's everywhere! On the shirts of visitors to June's Summerfest. On the refrigerators of the hippest people in Atlanta. On the walls of America's celebrities, and soon, winging her way across the sky emblazoned onto the newest plane for Atlanta-based Vacation Express. She's Jules Burt, the exuberant artist and owner of Jules Jewels, who donated her joyful artwork to bedeck t-shirts and magnets, and benefit the neighborhood through sales at Summerfest 2001.

Jules was delighted to create the artwork for the neighborhood festival. She

spent almost a month deciding on the images that would show visitors what makes our neighborhood so great, and the theme, "Virginia-Highland, where the hip hang out" just seemed natural to her. The bright colors picturing the collection of images of "cool shops", "good food", and the intown skyline made this year's design a real collector's item. If you didn't pick up your t-shirt and magnet at Summerfest, it's not too late. Jules is selling them in her shop. T-shirts are \$10 and magnets are \$4 and 100% of the proceeds go to the Virginia-Highland Civic Association and its charitable projects.



In June, Jules took time away from her painting and the shop to attend the nation's largest licensing show in New York. *Business Unusual* on CNN/FN followed Jules around the show, and then featured her work as an entrepreneur on CNN/FN and Headline News.

Jules smiles and says, "Watch out Andy Warholl When I grow up, I'm going to be the next Pop-Art Princess." Her Royal Highness may be visited at the shop on Saturday afternoons. Jules Jewels, at 1037 N. Highland, open Sunday through Wednesday, noon to 8pm, and Thursday, 11am to 9pm, Friday and Saturday, 11am to 10pm.

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DAVID DEBATOR TO THE RESCUE

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTIONS

Ruthie POenn-David, President, VHCA

One of the most important responsibilities of membership in the Virginia-Highland Civic Association (VHCA) is electing a Board of Directors. Elections for these positions will be held at the Annual Meeting on September 5. I cannot stress enough the importance of electing individuals who are responsible and have the spare time to serve on the Board. It is also key that they have educated themselves about VHCA activities and what is involved in being a Board member. A good start is to have attended monthly General meetings in the past. We need good people, and we need a great deal of their time.

If you would like to be more involved and informed, but cannot spare the time to serve on the Board, attend the monthly VHCA general meetings and serve on a committee. You don't need to be a board member to get more involved!

See you all at the Annual Meeting.

## PLANNING COMMITTEE NEWS

Betty Baumann & Winnie Currie, Co-Chairs, Planning Committee

As the end of the 2000-2001 Civic Association Board approaches, we thought it would be helpful to review zoning issues that have effected our neighborhood this past year. Most requests we received have been residential as many of our neighbors seek to enlarge their homes rather than sell and leave the neighborhood. There were a record number of 'side yard setback' requests to allow second floors to be added and we have seen smaller houses torn down and larger homes built in their place. Side yard and front yard setbacks were set for our neighborhood after most of our homes were built. For most of Virginia-Highland, the side yard setback (how close you can build to the property line) is 7 feet and many existing houses were built closer than that. So when property owners seek to raise the roof along the existing plane of the structure, they must go through the variance process to be allowed to build the second floor.

Thankfully there have not been many large commercial changes to review. The old 'eats'n'sweets' location was approved for retail space and several commercial parking requirements have been reviewed. The planning committee reviews parking requests in detail since traffic and parking have a dramatic effect on most all of us.

Much of the Planning Committee and Parks Committee resources was spent on 830 Ponce de Leon. This was a unique situation where the Civic Association attempted to stop the developer's plan to cut some of the trees on that lot in order to make way for a 51-unit condominium complex across from the entrance to Freedom Parkway. Great effort was put forth from Stephanie Coffin to negotiate with the developer to save at least the edge trees. Planning Committee member, Steve Kushner, recommended our lawyer, Michael Bowers, and acted as the liaison between the Civic Association and the law office. Stephanie, Steve and MANY other residents fought long and hard to save the trees but we recently received word that our case has been lost. To everyone who attended Tree Commission meetings, protested in front of the property, and spent long hours reviewing building plans, we thank you for your support and wish the outcome had been in favor of our neighborhood trees.

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## PUBLIC SAFETY NEWS

billie jo, Chair, Public Safety Committee

### WALK HIGHLAND WITH YOUR NEIGHBORS - Monday, September 10, 6:30pm

Earlier this year, your VHCA board voted to join PEDS (Pedestrians Educating Drivers on Safety). We will be working with PEDS and other Atlanta neighborhoods to improve pedestrian safety and awareness. One of our projects is "PEDS walk evening" which will be the **second Monday of each month**. Our last one was held on August 13.

On September 10, we will be meeting in the Highland CVS parking lot at 6:30 p.m. These events will be short in length and powerful in results! Get to know your neighbors while participating in this life-saving event. So far, we have held 4 successful PEDS walks.

#### Upcoming PEDS events:

PEDS has designed a pace car kit to educate drivers. One was purchased for six blocks of St. Charles, Frederica, and Drewry streets residents. The residents have signed a pledge stating, "I will drive the posted speed, walk more, and stop for pedestrians in crosswalks". After signing, a yellow and black pace car sticker is placed on the resident's car. If you are interested in a kit for your block/s please call me at 404/892-7070. The purchase price is \$15 for a 10-car kit and \$25 for a 20-car kit.

#### Other news:

We were happy to have a speed detector placed at various locations in the neighborhood including the intersection of Rosedale and N. Highland, one block south of the YWCA. The detector was on Freedom Parkway for three weeks.

Your VHCA continues to employ Barry Miller and David Ferguson to patrol N. Highland two evenings a week, with excellent results. Attend your monthly meetings to receive a copy of their crime log.

## Atkins Park Holds Parking Meeting

Mary Chance, Atkins Park Neighborhood Association

Parking issues are a concern to neighbors up and down the Highland and Virginia corridors. The streets of Atkins Park - St. Augustine Place, St. Charles Place, and St. Louis Place - form the southeastern boundary of our neighborhood and parking problems are increasingly on the minds of the residents.

We've come to the conclusion that there's no easy solution, but there are options, one of which is residential permit parking. We've set up a meeting for **Thursday, September 20, at 7pm** at the Ponce de Leon branch of the Atlanta Public Library. We've invited our Councilperson, and representatives from Ansley Park who live with residential permit parking, as well as the police and other city employees, to help us discuss the pros and cons. All residents of Virginia-Highland are welcome to attend.

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## SUMMERFEST 2001

Krista Miller, Editor, VHCA VOICE

This year's Summerfest was a great success. Thousands of people visited our neighborhood to enjoy the annual event and they were not disappointed. The artists market was very popular as arts and crafts of all kinds were available for purchase. Children had a great time at the Kids Fest where there were all sorts of fun activities just for them. Music entertained the crowds for both days. Everyone seemed to enjoy the variety of local bands. The 5K run was also a success, as was the Tot Trot.

The only mar in this years festival was a menacing down-pour on Sunday. It started at 5pm, one hour before the festival was to close. I have never been caught in such a storm. Everyone was soaked as they tried to get home or find shelter. Many tried to wait out the storm under the tents, which didn't work since the wind was blowing almost horizontally and some of the tents started to blow over! We would like to say a special thanks to all of the volunteers who stayed to help close down. We know it was a difficult task. Thank you also to the Security staff for working with us throughout the storm. You hung right in there with us, and we know that it could not have been easy in your uniforms.

Summerfest would not be possible without all of the volunteers who sell T-shirts, and tokens, run the Kids Fest, pour beer, and help with the set up and breakdown of the site.

We would like to say a special thanks to the neighbors along Virginia Avenue and its side streets. It is a tribute to the Summerfest Organizing Committee that the breakdown was completed by 8:30p.m. Finally, congratulations to Pam Trettel, this year's Summerfest chairperson who did a great job coordinating this annual event. This year's Summerfest netted over \$50,000 which helps pay for our security patrol, fight legal battles, and support our schools and parks.

## PARK AND TREE NEWS

Stephanie Coffin, Co-Chair, Parks Committee

### GEORGIA POWER BEGINS LINE CLEARANCE IN AUGUST

Georgia Power forester Scott Souder notified me that Georgia Power will begin line clearance on most streets in our neighborhood. The process will take about four months. Three years ago when Georgia Power trimmed street trees, many neighbors complained about poor supervision and drastic pruning cuts. Souder assured me that the crews will be better supervised.

In addition to line clearance, Souder and I will identify more trees that have been topped and should be replaced. Two years ago, in a cooperative effort, we identified about 20 trees that were replaced with species that would not grow into the lines. The Parks Department took care of removal and Georgia Power paid for replacement. If you have any questions while the pruning is progressing, please call Souder at (404) 572-7765.

### 821 AND 817 BROOKRIDGE DR. NE

Several months ago these two lots directly across from Orme Park were bought by a developer. The developer's plans to build two very large houses on the small, steep lots meant that virtually every tree on these heavily wooded sites would be taken down. Because of the heavy grading, even trees in the setbacks were scheduled for removal. Nearby neighbors appealed the City Arborist's decision to approve the developer's plans to the City of Atlanta Tree Conservation Commission. The VHCA Board of Directors voted to support the neighbor's appeal.

Neighbors leafleted the neighborhood, launched a very successful on-line petition, and had several meetings with other builders, neighbors, and the developer. Fortunately, before the scheduled time of the Tree Conservation Commission hearing, the developer withdrew her plans. Both lots have since been placed on the market for sale. For more information and history on this topic, please visit our website, [www.vahi.org](http://www.vahi.org).

### FINAL DEFEAT AT 830 PONCE DE LEON

On Wednesday, July 18, the VHCA received word that the Supreme Court of Georgia refused to hear our case against Paces Properties. The court held that Paces had no notice of Virginia-Highland's right to have a say in the development of the land. This right was stated in the 1992 agreement signed by seven neighborhoods, the City of Atlanta, and the Georgia Department of Transportation. The 1992 agreement, adopted both by the Georgia Legislature and the City Council, ended the struggle against a freeway to Stone Mountain. It detailed plans for Freedom Parkway and the development of land that DOT had previously seized.

For over a year, neighborhood leaders fought the Paces development plan for the lot which would leave only nine trees standing. It would also have an unsafe curb cut on Ponce de Leon. Before the Supreme Court decision, the VHCA received support for saving the edge trees from Ponce-Highland, Candler Park Neighborhood Association, Freedom Park Conservancy, and NPU-F, all of whom signed a friend of the court brief with the Supreme Court. In addition, Jimmy Carter and the Carter Center sent a warm letter of support.

Then on the night of July 18, the Tree Conservation Commission, announcing "closure", accepted a revised tree plan authored by Paces and the Director of the Bureau of Buildings, Norman Koplon. This new plan claimed to be an improvement over the previous plan. Without refuting evidence of dead, damaged, and topped trees supposedly "saved" on the revised plan, the Commission - without ever even visiting the site - voted 3-2 to accept the plan.

This hearing was the last of three before the Tree Commission. It culminated a process in which the Bureau of Buildings lost plans, presented incomplete plans, and at the end could only produce photocopies of the plans furnished by Paces. There is really only one positive aspect to the defeat. The land has been a garbage dump for more than 20 years under the neglectful stewardship first of the DOT and, for the last year-and-a-half, Paces Properties. Perhaps now it will at least be cleaned up.

The beautiful mature oak canopy will be missed by the thousands of people driving down Ponce de Leon and exiting Freedom Parkway. The air will be dirtier and the water runoff greater. The soon-to-be-initiated John Lewis Plaza will face a condo development that best fits in on Buford Highway or in Sandy Springs. In my opinion, this was one more phony promise of the DOT and a missed opportunity for the City of Atlanta to create housing in a livable environment.

## VHCA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ruthie Penn-David, President	404-875-2942
Ben Barkley, Vice President	404-607-0763
Chair, Parenting & Education Committee	
Wiley Sommerville, Treasurer	404-881-1003
Betty Baumann, Secretary	404-872-6446
Co-chair, Planning	
Billie Jo, St. Charles/Greenwood Rep.	404-892-7070
Chair, Public Safety Committee	
Co-chair, Parks Committee	
Mary Chance, Atkins Park Rep.	404-892-7657
Erin Chance	404-876-7217
Winnie Currie	
Co-chair, Planning	404-876-5101
Chip Gallagher, Chair, Membership	404-249-6390
Steven Kushner	404-892-6945
Debbie Skopczynski	404-874-7483
Chair, Steering Committee	

### VHCA COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

In addition to those listed above:	
Stephanie Coffin, Co-chair, Parks	404-874-0523
Krista Miller, Editor, VHCA VOICE	404-892-9024
<a href="mailto:kristam@mindspring.com">kristam@mindspring.com</a>	

## TREES ATLANTA SALE

Trees Atlanta has scheduled its second annual Tree Sale fundraiser for Saturday, October 13, at Piedmont Park from 8am to 2pm. The sale will feature unusual and hard-to-find trees with a concentration on varieties native to the South and to Georgia. A few of the native trees to be offered include beech, weeping winged elm, paw paw, and 17 varieties of native oaks. For a complete list, visit [www.treesatlanta.org](http://www.treesatlanta.org), or contact [todd.wiggins@cingular.com](mailto:todd.wiggins@cingular.com).

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## OVERVIEW OF THE ORGANIZATION OF THE VHCA

Ruthie Penn-David, President, VHCA

Several people have asked that we describe the responsibilities of, and what is involved in being, a VHCA Board member. I am glad to have the chance to respond to this request.

The Board consists of 11 members. Two members have annual appointed positions, one from the Atkins Park neighborhood, and one from the St. Charles/Greenwood neighborhood. The remaining nine members have At Large positions and are elected by the membership each year at the Annual Meeting.

The newly elected Board of Directors elects its officers at an organizational meeting a few days following the Annual Meeting. There are four officer positions: president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer.

The **president's** main duties include planning and chairing monthly Board and General (community) meetings, fielding a lot of telephone calls and e-mails, communicating with the other Board members and committee chairs, and attending other City and community meetings as the VHCA spokesperson. The president's duties require 15-20 hours per week.

The **vice president** (VP) fills in for the president. The VP's duties do not typically require a lot of additional spare time, unless, of course, the president is not available, or resigns mid-term. The VP usually chairs one of the committees.

The **secretary** records and catalogues the minutes of the monthly Board and General meetings. This position requires an organized person who is available for the meetings.

The **treasurer** is responsible for the budgeting, bookkeeping, and tax coordination for the Association, including the extra work represented by Summerfest. This position is time-consuming, particularly in the period immediately around Summerfest. From February through the end of June, the treasurer spends an average of 15 hours per week on the bookkeeping for Summerfest alone.

In addition to the officer positions, there are several ongoing committee positions that must be filled. One of the most demanding committee positions is that of the chairperson of the **Planning Committee**. The Planning Committee meets every month with property and business owners to review their variance, special exception, special use permit, rezoning, and alcoholic beverage license applications. Duties include fielding a lot of questions, research, making recommendations to the full Board, communicating with several City of Atlanta departments, and attending City of Atlanta hearings and other meetings as a VHCA representative. The Planning Committee chair position is almost full-time.

The **Summerfest Steering Committee** and **Fundraising Committee** are key to the success of Summerfest, the neighborhood's annual fundraiser. The Steering Committee provides oversight to all aspects of the festival and keeps the full Board informed. The Fundraising Committee guides the Summerfest Chairperson in acquiring sponsors, and reports to the Steering Committee and full Board as to status.

We have been fortunate to have had dedicated **Parks Committee** co-chairs for several years. The primary duty of the Parks Committee is coordinating

tree and flower planting in the public spaces in the neighborhood. In addition, the Virginia-Highland Civic Fund, a "sister" organization to the VHCA, oversees the maintenance and planning for John Howell Park, and more, recently, projects in Orme Park.

The VHCA **Public Safety** chairperson stays in touch with Zone 6 Police personnel to inform the community of any recent crimes and to voice community concerns to the police. Recently, the Public Safety chairperson has also acted as a liaison for the North Highland off-duty security patrol and has organized pedestrian awareness events in the neighborhood.

Other committees include **Membership** and **Parenting & Education**. There's also the Virginia-Highland VOICE newsletter, of course, and managing the VHCA website ([www.vahi.org](http://www.vahi.org)) and e-mail distribution list. Besides committees, the VHCA Board appoints representatives to other organizations such as the Freedom Park Conservancy. Committee assignments take place along with officer elections annually at the organizational meeting of the newly elected Board.

Besides attending regular monthly Board and General meetings, an occasional Special Board meeting, and attending to officer and committee responsibilities, Board members are often needed to attend City of Atlanta public hearings on hot issues.

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## TEN REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD INVEST IN YOUR VIRGINIA-HIGHLAND CIVIC ASSOCIATION

1. You are awed by all the pretty **flowers and trees** planted by the Association throughout the neighborhood.
2. You appreciate the Association's contribution to the **maintenance** of play structures, flowers, grass, and trees in the **public parks** throughout our community.
3. You are pleased that the Association works to maintain a **reasonable balance** between the number of business establishments and residential growth that gives Virginia-Highland its village feel.
4. You live in one of the **safest neighborhoods** in the city, thanks in part to the additional police patrols financed by the Civic Association.
5. You enjoy **Summerfest**.
6. You are happy that measures are being taken to **slow down traffic** throughout Virginia-Highland.
7. You like knowing that members in your community are **monitoring issues** at City Hall which directly affect our neighborhood.
8. You feel good knowing that people are fighting to maintain the beautiful canopy of **old growth trees** which makes our neighborhood so shaded, lush, and verdant.
9. You like the fact that the Association will reimburse you for up to 25% of your cost when you **repave your sidewalks**.
10. You become or continue to be a paid member because you know that you live in the **best neighborhood in the city**.

We are accepting dues for the 2001 year. Your payment of \$25 helps to keep our neighborhood safe, clean, pedestrian-minded, beautiful, kid-friendly, green, and immensely livable. Please pay your dues and consider running for a seat on the Board of Directors.

Yes, I want to be a dues-paying member of the Virginia-Highland Civic Association. Enclosed is my check for \$25. (Larger contributions are welcome.)

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If you have questions, contact Chip Gallagher, Membership Chair, 404-249-6390, cgallagher@gsu.edu.