

February 2007

2007 Board

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600 Northwood Avenue

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201 Hillcrest Road

Robert LeHeup (Treasurer)
806-D E. Jefferson Street

Ernie Reed
610 Farish Street

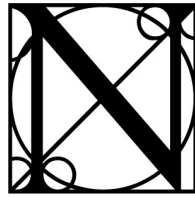
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307-C 2nd Street N.W.

Allan Thomson
709 Cargil Lane

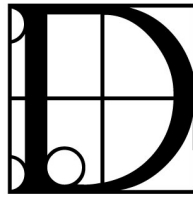
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Jill Williams (Secretary)
101 3rd Street S.E.

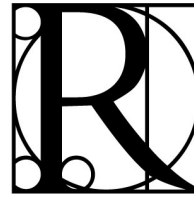
NDRA
PO Box 1739
Charlottesville, VA 22902
<http://avenue.org/ndra>



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The Newsletter of North Downtown

The Problems of Parking

Parking—and particularly the lack thereof—is a perennial issue in North Downtown. Fortunately, most of the predominantly residential streets closest to the Downtown Mall have permit parking in an effort to conserve spaces for residents.

Permits do not solve all parking issues, however, and can sometimes move the problem to nearby streets that are not permitted. Altamont Street is one of those locations, and the difficulties of residents along its short length demonstrate some of the pitfalls in the process and the need for a new, neighborhood-wide parking policy.

City code 15-203 is straightforward on the permit parking process: residents along a street submit a formal request to Neighborhood Development Services, who surveys the street on three random days to verify that at least 75% of spaces are occupied, and that at least 50% of those are filled by commuters.

Altamont has twice been surveyed for permit parking, in the spring of 2006 and again this past January. Both times, the 50% commuter requirement has been soundly met on all days, but on one day in 2006 only 70% of spots were occupied, and on one day this January only 61%. Despite much higher occupancy rates on the other days, the permit request was denied.

City Council does have the authority to amend or supersede Code requirements, so residents of Altamont Street are attempting to gather data from NDS on the number of spots used for the survey to prepare for a possible petition to City Council.

Even if its request is granted, however, Altamont residents may not find full relief. North Downtown falls within an area of the City where permit parking is allowed only between 6:00 A.M. and 5:00 P.M. on weekdays. Due to their proximity to the activities on the Mall, many North Downtown streets suffer as much from evening leisure traffic as from daytime commuters.



Residents of Wine Street, one of the few other streets in North Downtown without

permit parking, are beginning the request process, but risk the same technicalities that have befallen Altamont. The current street-by-street process needs to be replaced by a neighborhood-wide implementation.

NDRA is forming an ad hoc committee to undertake a comprehensive review of neighborhood parking problems and to propose solutions. Please contact NDRA President Colette Hall at colettehall@earthlink.net if you are interested in participating.

McIntire Road Trail Dedication

Chris Gensic, Trails Planner,
Charlottesville Parks

Dedication of the new trail along McIntire Road is scheduled, appropriately enough, for Arbor Day, April 27. The ceremony, which will also recognize the City’s designation by the National Arbor Foundation as a Tree City U.S.A., will include a tree planting and ribbon cutting.

The trail is designed to entice more people to use the park, get to know the stream, enjoy the Art-in-Place, and be able to walk and bicycle safely in a pleasant setting. Future efforts include replacing distressed trees with new ones in better locations, and roughly 25 trees will be planted in April. The mulched planting beds will be filled with bulbs and other plants this spring.

The first phase of the trail runs from Harris Street to the recycling center. In the future, the trail will continue north to the Bypass and south to Preston Avenue, and might even bridge Schenck’s Branch creek. The City is also working with the traffic engineer to recommend locations for possible pedestrian crosswalks over McIntire Road.

This stretch of parkland is within the original boundaries of McIntire Park, but the construction of the 250 Bypass and growth of McIntire Road long ago cut it off from the rest of the park. In order to give this area a new identity and highlight Schenck’s Branch, the City Parks department has collected suggestions and will announce a new name at the Arbor Day celebration.



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As noted in the September 2006 *NDRA News*, the students of the Living Education Center for Ecology and the Arts are using Schenck’s Branch as a living science lab. The students have measured the extent of the discharge below Allied Concrete, and have found that there are areas on the stream bank, just above the water line, that are as much as 4.5 inches deep with cement sand and gravel. Along the edge of the stream, some areas have 1.5-2 inches of accumulated sandy sediment.

Prompted by an inquiry from the Living Education Center, an unannounced

inspection by the State Department of Environmental Quality found evidence of unauthorized discharges into the creek. The DEQ is requiring Allied to submit plans for eliminating such discharges in the future, to report “unauthorized, unusual, or extraordinary” discharges, and to consider retaining and maintaining a silt fence.

Also of concern to the creek’s health is runoff from the numerous industrial properties along Harris Street. Virginia Oil has recently applied for a renewal of its water discharge permit, which allows for the discharge of up to 73,000 gallons of “treated wastewater” into the creek daily. While the DEQ has found no violations by Virginia Oil—in fact, repeated testing has shown hydrocarbon discharge levels well below the legal maximum—the Living Education Center has requested, and NDRA has supported, a public hearing for the renewal of the permit.



The new trail along McIntire Road, running from the Recycling Center to Harris Street.

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COMPASS Promises Homeless Relief at First Christian Church

Erik Speer, COMPASS Project Coordinator

An out-of-town benefactor has bought the First Christian Church at First and Market Streets, and has pledged to offer it up to COMPASS Day Haven and other benevolent community organizations. A history of good works, which for years included the Friday soup kitchen, will continue with hearty approval from the city.

The facade of this beautiful and historic church building will remain intact, with the addition of handicapped access and fresh landscaping. Led by the architectural firm of Wolf and Ackerman, inside renovations will include new energy systems, new plumbing, enhanced lighting, and fire-safe stairs. The majestic sanctuary will be opened to community cultural groups for creative nightly events, and the four-story annex will become home to a variety of non-profit offices, many relating to homeless service providers. The 2000-square foot basement will be occupied by COMPASS Day Haven, a new Charlottesville organization, providing a referral and help desk, restrooms, showers, lockers, and laundry facilities. Close connection to other non-profits will make self-help programs and medical, educational, and employment assistance readily available.

City planners unanimously recommended granting the special use permit for this space. As of February 5, with the passing of City Council's approval, the church building will continue as a beautiful place of good works in Downtown Charlottesville.

McGuffey Park to Become a Reality

Kristen Suokko, Friends of McGuffey

The vision of an innovative, nature-inspired, child-friendly community gathering space in downtown Charlottesville is set to become a reality. Thanks to an unprecedented public-private partnership, widespread community support, and financial contributions from a wide variety of donors, the McGuffey Park project is expected to break ground in late spring and be completed by the fall.

Friends of McGuffey Park partnered with the Charlottesville Community Design Center, the City's Parks and Recreation Department, and Siteworks design studio nearly three years ago to launch this effort to transform the underutilized and deteriorating park. After an extensive community input process and fundraising effort, the project has gone through formal approval and is set to go out for bids. The North Downtown Capital Improvement Project Funds for 2003-2006 were dedicated to this project, and many North Downtown residents have generously supported the effort.

The new park will feature two new entryways, continuous walkways, exhibits by local artists, native habitat gardens, a permeable basketball court that doubles as a performance space, and innovative play equipment. Look for announcements about a groundbreaking ceremony in the coming months.



CIP Projects Sought

The eighteen City-designated neighborhoods, including North Downtown, are eligible to nominate a Capital Improvement Project for funding by April 30.

This funding is not intended for big ticket items like drainage and sidewalks, which continue to be managed by NDS under the traditional CIP process, but could include such projects as entry signs, community bulletin boards, bus-stop benches, street trees, and landscaping. Projects must be located on public right of way, and neighborhoods may propose joint projects.

The total funding available for the three-year program is \$360,000. There is no limit on the dollar value of an individual project, but the more neighborhoods that submit 'worthy' projects, the farther the funding will have to go. Also, there is no guarantee the Selection Committee will pick a project from each neighborhood that submits a request.

Projects must have a volunteer coordinator, and for any purchase of goods and/or services include four separate quotes (although for projects that could be performed by City staff, the City can provide an estimate). The City's newly-formed Capital Improvement Selection Committee will make the final selection and funding decisions.

At its February meeting, NDRA considered tree planting along the new McIntire trail or streets throughout the neighborhood, or infrastructure improvements in Lee Park as possible projects. Please contact NDRA President Colette Hall at colettehall@earthlink.net if you have additional suggestions, or are willing to serve as a volunteer coordinator.

Downtown Calendar

Ongoing

Charlottesville City Council

First and Third Mondays of the month (Tuesday if the Monday is a holiday), 7:00 PM, Council Chambers, City Hall. City Council meetings are open to the public, and televised on cable Channel 10. Time is open at the beginning and end of each meeting for speakers on subjects not listed on the agenda.

NDRAs Monthly Meeting

Last Thursday of each Month, 7:00 PM, Downtown Library. See schedule on page 6.

Planning Commission

Second Tuesday of the month, 6:30 PM, Council Chambers, City Hall. The Planning Commission advises City Council on the City's comprehensive plan, including land use, transportation, community facilities and service, zoning, subdivision, capital programming and other planning.

Board of Architectural Review

Third Tuesday of the month, 5:00 PM, Neighborhood Development Services Conference Room, City Hall. The BAR considers proposed construction in the Historic Preservation and Architectural Design Control District—which includes significant parts of North Downtown—to preserve and protect old, historic or architecturally worthy structures, spaces and neighborhoods. The BAR ensures that any new development or alteration of existing structures and spaces is in harmony with the historic or architectural character of the area.

Historic Downtown Walking Tours

Saturdays, 10:00 AM, leaving from the Albemarle Charlottesville Historical Society, 200 2nd Street NE. Walking tours of historic downtown Charlottesville. Learn about the early years of Charlottesville, its citizens, businesses, and buildings. \$3 donation suggested; 296-1492, www.albemarlehistory.org

Charlottesville City Market

Saturdays through October, 7:00 AM-NOON, Water Street Parking Lot. Home-grown, home-made, and home-baked items from local gardeners, bakers, and artisans. The weekly market resumes operations in mid April.

Fridays After Five

Fridays, through September, 5:30-9:00 PM, Charlottesville Pavilion. Free weekly concerts resume in late spring, and run every Friday through early fall. The 2007 season begins this spring. www.charlottesvillepavilion.com

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March-August

Charlottesville Ten Miler

Up to 2500 runners will be passing through North Downtown on the morning of Saturday, March 31! Some roads may be closed at during portions of the race. Residents who are interested in helping to guide the runners along the course and ensure their safety, as well as in cheering them on, can volunteer at www.cvilletenmiler.com. Volunteers will receive training and a race-day shirt.

56th Annual Dogwood Festival

April 10-22. Events throughout the city, including the **Dogwood Festival Grand Parade** on April 21 at 10:50 AM. Marching bands, clowns, floats, Miss Virginia, and the Dogwood Queen and her Court.

Historic Garden Week

April 21-28. Selected private homes and gardens open for tours statewide, including the Charlottesville and Albemarle area April 21-24. Admission charge for some tours. 804/644-7776, www.vagardenweek.org

Municipal Band Summer Concerts

June 12 & 26, July 10 & 24, August 7 & 21, 8:00 PM, Charlottesville Pavilion. Free concert of musical genres from marches to Broadway show tunes, classical, light classical and pops, performed by Charlottesville's finest since 1922.

Join the NDRA

From South Street and the Downtown Mall to the 250 Bypass, and from McIntire and Birdwood Roads in the east to Kelly Avenue in the west, North Downtown is the heart of Charlottesville. What voice do you have in its future?

The NDRA advocates for our neighborhood and distributes this newsletter three times a year. The NDRA welcomes all residents of North Downtown as members. Annual dues are \$10 per household; make checks payable to NDRA.

Name

Address

City/State/Zip

Telephone

E-Mail Address

Check here if you prefer to be notified by e-mail when a newsletter is posted on-line **instead** of receiving a printed copy by mail.

Please mail to:
North Downtown Residents Association
PO Box 1739
Charlottesville VA 22902

Park Street Zoning Issue

NDRA has been supporting the efforts of a number of Park Street residents in their investigation of a zoning appeal of a property on the 700 block of the street. Neighbors have questioned the use of the property as a boarding house, whether it might also be providing nursing care that requires a license, and the presence of some residents on the state list of sexual offenders.

Investigation by the City determined that the property is a "non-confirming duplex" within legal bounds. The Virginia Department of Social Services has also investigated use of the property, and ruled that the number of residents requiring care is not enough to fall under state licensing requirements for nursing homes.

NDRA supported the filing of a Zoning appeal with a \$100 contribution. While it was ultimately determined that there is no basis for a legal challenge to the property's zoning, the effort has produced a number of positive outcomes for North Downtown residents:

- Neighbors banded together for a common goal.
- Neighbors plan to start a Neighborhood Watch Program.
- The renter knows we are a concerned neighborhood and expect her to follow the rules as any other neighbor would be expected.
- The Department of Social Services, local parole officers, and Neighborhood Development Services know the neighbors are now aware of the ordinances, procedures and steps to contact the correct agency/agencies.
- Neighbors now know how to check the Public Offender Registry.
- The police have increased their patrol of the area.

- The neighbors and the Baptist Church's pre-school have established lines of communication.
- And, perhaps best of all, neighbors got to know each other.

Web Site Update in the Works

Keep an eye on the NDRA web page this summer. The board has approved an effort to redesign the page, which will make it easier to update and to post more timely information.

As part of the project, we will also begin taking annual dues payments via PayPal.

2006 Financial Report

2006 Treasurer's Report

Compared to 2005, membership income rebounded well, due to there having been a full complement of three newsletters and more diligent efforts to attract dues-paying members.

However, expenses also increased—more newsletters meant more postage, and the free printing we had enjoyed for a number of years came to an end, thus creating a new expense for those newsletters. The Association also did some advertising through the distribution of magnets, and supported investigation of a possible zoning appeal on Park Street. To offset those increases, expenditures for the neighborhood picnic decreased.

Expected expenses for the coming year are the production and mailing of 2-3 issues of the newsletter, the annual neighborhood picnic, an annual incorporation fee to the Commonwealth of Virginia, and post office box rental.

1,205.01 Balance on 1/1/06
1,090.00 Membership dues
8.45 Interest earned
(468.14) Postage
(313.00) Picnic—food & music
(188.12) NDRA magnets
(161.70) Newsletter printing
(100.00) Zoning appeal
(80.78) Office supplies
(40.00) Post office box rental
(25.00) Virginia incorporation fee
926.72 Balance on 12/31/06

The Big Read Announced

In conjunction with the Virginia Foundation for the Humanity's Center for the Book, the Jefferson-Madison Regional Library is inviting Charlottesville residents to participate in the Big Read. The goal is to encourage citizens throughout the city to read and discuss F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* during the month of April. The library will be hosting author programs, book discussions, and performance pieces about the book and the time period it describes.

Since the first community reading event in Seattle in 1998, numerous municipalities throughout the U.S. have hosted similar initiatives, including other Virginia localities such as Richmond, Norfolk, and Arlington.

The Great Gatsby is recognized as one of the greatest works of American fiction, and its timeless themes of honesty, temptation, and reinvention are just as important today as they were 80 years ago. The library encourages book groups and other organizations to sponsor discussions or programs.

Details about the special programs sponsored by the library are available at www.jmrl.org and from David Plunkett, chair of the JMRL Goodwill Committee, at dplunkett@jmrl.org.



CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA 22902

DO NOT FORWARD
CURRENT RESIDENT OR:

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We Need You

This newsletter is sent to all the residents of North Downtown, making the support of those members who pay annual dues all the more important. Look at your address label below; if the date above your name is 2006—or if there’s no date at all—it’s time to show your support for the NDRA.

Only \$10 gets you the *NDRA News* and supports the association in its efforts to improve North Downtown. Dues are also used for supplies, postage, and the annual picnic. NDRA represents you before City Council, the Planning Commission, and other City committees. The Board President also sits on the Downtown Advisory Committee. Please mail your check with the form on page 4 today!

Newsletters Available On-Line

Would you prefer to receive this newsletter on-line? If so, you can help the NDRA save on printing and postage costs by letting us know, and we’ll send you an e-mail when each new edition of the *NDRA News* is posted to our web page. In fact, our past newsletters are posted there as well, at <http://avenue.org/ndra>.

If you wish to read this newsletter on-line, simply check the electronic newsletter box on the membership renewal form. We also use our e-mail list to send notices about board meetings, meetings, and workshops sponsored by the City and occasional other items of interest. The list is moderated to prevent spam, and we will never sell your e-mail address or share it with commercial firms.

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2007 Meeting Schedule

NDRA meetings begin at 7:00 P.M. in one of the third-floor meeting rooms of the Downtown Library. All are welcome.

- March 29
- April 26
- May 31
- June 28
- July TBA
- August 30
- September 27
- September TBA -
 Neighborhood Picnic
- October 25
- December 6