VPIS and City Join in RainSmart Program

Joint Program to Improve Stormwater Management

The Falls Church Village Preservation and Improvement Society (VPIS) and the City of Falls Church have agreed to work together to implement a new RainSmart Program to improve management of stormwater.

The RainSmart program provides grant funding to help City of Falls Church residents implement practices, such as rain barrels and rain gardens, which help rainwater soak into the ground on-site to prevent flooding and protect water quality locally and in the wider Chesapeake Bay watershed.

City stormwater engineer Jason Widstrom worked with VPIS Board member Jeff Peterson to design the program. VPIS and the City have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding outlining the program. The City is providing $10,000 in initial funding.

Rain barrels are a simple tool that City residents can use to manage stormwater by catching runoff from roofs. Under the new program, City residents can apply for grant funds for up to two rain barrels with a limit of $50 for each barrel.

Some residents may want to use this grant toward the cost of materials at rain barrel workshops in the region sponsored by the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District (see https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/soil-water-conservation/rain-barrel). Residents also have the option of applying for a grant to support purchase of rain barrels from another source. Residents are responsible for installing and maintaining rain barrels.

Another opportunity to improve local stormwater management is to install a rain garden that is designed to help rainwater soak into the ground and reduce high volumes of runoff that carry sediment, nutrients, and other pollutants into local streams.

Under the RainSmart Program, City residents can apply for grant funds to cover up to 50% of the cost of a project or $1,500, whichever is less. Grants are also available for landscape conservation projects that have stormwater benefits. These projects need to be designed and installed by contractors approved by the RainSmart Program. A link to the list of certified contractors is available on the grant application form, located on the VPIS website.

Funds for both rain barrel and rain garden grants are limited. Applications for rain barrels will be considered on a continuing basis until available funds for the year are committed. Applications for rain gardens and conservation landscapes require some initial design and are due by May 4. Applications received by that date will be considered and funded to the extent funds are available, giving priority to projects with...
The Village Way

The Falls Church Village Preservation and Improvement Society

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President’s Message by Elizabeth Meade

As a member of the Village Preservation and Improvement Society, you have most likely heard the phrase “You Moved Here for a Reason.” Have you ever taken a moment to ask yourself: what is that reason? And, whether you have lived here for two or over twenty years, has your reason ever changed?

My family moved to the City of Falls Church well over twenty years ago. At the time we purchased a house here in Falls Church because we wanted our children to attend our excellent schools. But what we found beyond the excellent school system was something more—an organization consisting of engaged citizens, young and old, working together to preserve the cultural, environmental, and historical significance of Falls Church.

And that organization is VPIS.

VPIS has worked hard to promote community appreciation of the historic significance of Falls Church as well as encourage beautification of both commercial and residential development. This year we have been active in the discussions surrounding the downtown plaza, City Hall/Cherry Hill park renovations, and the Broad and Washington development (see page 8). All letters we have sent are on our website at www.VPIS.org.

We are also really excited to unveil a new program called RainSmart, which will provide funding to help Falls Church City residents implement smart environmental practices such as rain barrels and rain gardens. Such strategies help rainwater soak into the ground on-site to prevent flooding and protect the quality of local streams and the wider Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Please come to our spring membership meeting on Sunday, April 22 from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. at the American Legion Hall (400 N Oak St, Falls Church). We will be talking more about this topic as well as other important environmental and current issues affecting our members. All are welcome and we will have refreshments after the meeting. I hope to see you there.

We will continue our annual activities such as our successful Farmers Market booth selling coffee and cold drinks to raise money for the Neighborhood Tree Program, our 51st Annual Attic Treasures sale May 19 in the Community Center, the very popular summer concerts in Cherry Hill Park beginning in June, Independence Day readings, the Women’s History March, Watch Night on New Year’s Eve, and candidate and other informational forums as issues arise.

These are the kinds of activities on which vibrant, attractive, and sustainable communities are built—those that enrich the lives of citizens and transmit the heritage of the region from one generation to the next. And this is exactly what VPIS is all about. Thank you for being a part of VPIS, and for your commitment to the future of the City of Falls Church.

April 2018
VPIS and City Join in RainSmart Program, continued

The Village Way

An installed rain barrel. Photo from EPA website.

the greatest stormwater benefits to the community.

The initiative also includes public information and outreach programs to promote stormwater management. VPIS will promote the RainSmart program using media and public events such as the Farmers Market and concerts in the park. VPIS will also develop educational materials, including flyers and brochures that will explain the risks posed by stormwater, the value of retaining stormwater on-site, and the practices that homeowners and others can implement to capture stormwater.

For more information about the program and for rain barrel and rain garden applications, go to: http://www.vpis.org/environment/rainsmart-program.

If you have questions about the RainSmart Program, send an email to RainSmartFallsChurch@gmail.com or call Jeff Peterson at 703-801-5135.

Tree Label Update

The first phase of the tree labeling project was completed with nearly 200 trees labeled on City street trees and in public parks. A small group of Boy Scouts from Troop 895, led by Eagle Scout candidate Ben Updike, mounted tree labels as part of the ongoing campaign by VPIS to raise awareness about the importance of a healthy urban tree canopy in the City of Falls Church. In this first phase of the education program, Ben and his team mounted labels on some of the most common species of trees including red maple, redbud, tulip poplar, willow oak, and red oak. The second phase will expand the tree identification project by mounting labels on some less common species. If you are interested in helping to grow our tree canopy, either by helping with educational programs or by planting new trees, contact the Neighborhood Tree Program at vpis.org/trees.

Volunteers Needed for VPIS Farmers Market Booth

The VPIS Falls Church Farmers Market Booth will run each Saturday from May 12 through November 17, 2018.

Volunteers are needed! There are two shifts each Saturday: 7–10 a.m., the booth setup shift; and 10 a.m.—noon, the booth tear-down shift. Each shift will have at least one seasoned, experienced volunteer on duty to guide any and all new volunteers. Volunteering your time, even if you can’t work an entire shift, is a great way to interact with other VPIS and community members while raising funds for the Neighborhood Tree Program and other VPIS-funded activities.

To volunteer, please contact Sam Beatty, volunteer coordinator, VPIS Falls Church Farmers Market Booth 2018, at waffles05@yahoo.com.
Neighborhood Tree Program by Seth Heminway

Spring is here and the Neighborhood Tree Program is starting up again. Two important dates are coming up: Arbor Day and Tree Planting on April 21, and Reception for Tree Stewards and the Neighborhood Tree Program on June 10.

Falls Church City Arbor Day Ceremony, Saturday, April 21 at 1:00 p.m. at the outdoor basketball court in Cherry Hill Park (312 Park Ave.). We’ll have refreshments and a 30-minute celebration with the City leaders and a representative from the Virginia Department of Forestry. (In case of rain we’ll meet in the Community Center.)

Tree Planting—Volunteers Needed. Immediately following the ceremony we’ll have a tree planting demonstration and then split into teams to plant 15–20 trees throughout Falls Church. You’ll want to wear gloves, boots or heavy shoes, and clothes that can get dirty. The City will provide tools. In case of steady rain we’ll plant on Sunday, April 22 at 1:00 p.m.) RSVP to heminway.seth@gmail.com.

Reception for the Tree Stewards of Arlington & Alexandria and the Falls Church City Neighborhood Tree Program, Sunday, June 10, 2018, 3–5 p.m., Falls Church Arts Gallery 700B West Broad Street (the Kensington Building). Join other Northern Virginia arborphiles for this informative networking opportunity, where you’ll hear from key City leaders who will describe the Urban Forestry Program and each of its supporting organizations and the roles they play. These include the Tree Commission, which advises the City; the Village Preservation and Improvement Society, whose volunteers and donations have helped to build and protect our tree canopy; and more recently the Tree Stewards of Arlington & Alexandria, who are providing regional leadership, information sharing, and volunteer training. We’ll also be showing the locally produced short film "Laying Down Roots" (2004) by Dave Eckert, which chronicles Falls Church’s historic dedication to trees. Join us as we explore opportunities moving forward. RSVP to: heminway.seth@gmail.com.

Annual Membership Drive

One of the benefits in living in our Little City is the character and charm that exist here. By renewing your VPIS membership for 2018, you are helping to ensure that we sustain the character and quality of life in Falls Church City.

The donations and membership dues we collect provide the majority of the funds for popular programs that support both environmental and cultural benefits to our community. These include the Neighborhood Tree program, the 26th annual Concerts in the Park this summer, and New Year’s Watch Night.

It is programs like these that truly make Falls Church City the special place we all call home, and we would like your support in ensuring this continues for many years to come. Please send in your donation with the completed membership postcard, if you have not already. If you have any questions or comments about your membership, please email Megan Hauber at meganhauber@gmail.com.

Summer Concerts Coming

Summer will be here soon and planning is underway for the popular Concerts in the Park in Cherry Hill. Watch for information on specific dates and groups that will perform.
Save the Date! 51st Annual Attic Treasures Sale

Saturday, May 19, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
Falls Church Community Center
Falls Church’s huge community yard sale

DONATIONS will be accepted between 9:00 a.m. and 7:30 p.m., Friday, May 18. Bring your donations to the entrance at the back of the gym, by the tennis courts. **All donations must be clean and in working order.** Sorry, but we cannot accept magazines.

All proceeds support the Neighborhood Tree Program and Concerts in the Park. Any unsold items will be donated to Unique Thrift Stores to benefit Special Olympics.

VPIS welcomes donations of the following:

- bicycles
- household goods & small furniture
- books (no magazines)
- kitchenware
- collectibles & art, picture frames
- musical instruments, recordings, stereos & CD players
- antiques
- plants, gardening items, outdoor ornaments
- DVDs
- jewelry
- toys, including electronic and handheld devices
- hardware & tools

**Special features** include live music by Andrew Acosta and Rosser Clark from 9–11 a.m., a craft table for kids, and our much-beloved baked goods!

We welcome VOLUNTEERS to help sort items and set up on Friday, and to sell and clean up on Saturday (we are completely done by 3:00 p.m.).

VPIS MEMBERS, this is our biggest fundraiser of the year; please consider donating your time along with surplus “attic treasures.”

With questions or to arrange a pickup if needed, contact Michael Connelly at 703-371-2369 or prareedog@gmail.com.

Check out our new website:
www.VPIS.org
We’re also on Facebook and Twitter
The Village Way

Note: VPIS is frequently asked to provide comments on important development issues in the City. Following is the letter we sent on the proposed Broad and Washington development. Copies of all letters are available on our website, www.VPIS.org.

The Falls Church Village Preservation and Improvement Society

January 17, 2018

Mayor Tarter and Members of City Council
Chair Wodiska and Members of the Planning Commission
City of Falls Church
300 Park Avenue
Falls Church, VA 22046

SUBJ: Response to the City’s Request for Comments on the Proposed Broad and Washington Streets development from the Board of Directors of the Falls Church Village Preservation and Improvement Society (VPIS)

Dear Mayor Tarter and Members of City Council and the Planning Commission;

The VPIS Board strongly supports commercial development as provided for in the City Comprehensive Plan that protects the quality of adjacent residential neighborhoods. We believe that good development projects can strengthen the City financially as well as provide local employment, an active business environment and social and cultural amenities for residents.

Our comments on the Broad and Washington Streets proposed project are as follows:

1. We support measures to protect the adjoining neighborhood from the impact of the proposed development and to reduce the height of the building all along Lawton Street.

2. The City should expect expanded voluntary concession (VC) benefits in exchange for the City conceding to a rezoning that changes a site now 100% commercial to mainly residential. For example: a traffic island on East Broad Street, with one or two trees, irrigation, and plantings which, with the similar one in front of Harris-Teeter, would provide a clear frame for downtown Falls Church.

3. Streetscape on this part of East Broad and North Washington Streets should match the existing Streetscape on West Broad Street, replacing the concrete poles and the non-matching traffic signal masts.
4. The City should require appropriate occupancy of the commercial portions of the development before significant activities can occur on the residential portion.

5. Given the development’s proximity to the City’s most historic and architecturally important building, the Falls Church, we are concerned that thus far the external architecture does not display a clear nexus to the character Falls Church hopes to maintain as illustrated in the City’s adopted Design Guidelines. The Broad Street façade of this project needs variations to break-up the massing and to provide relief from the long uniformity of the street wall. The rear elevation should be enhanced and improved.

6. The practice in recent years of allowing overgenerous parking requirement reductions should not be considered on this project. A public parking commitment should be required as well as connectivity to current City parking lots to expedite traffic flow.

7. We do not support the plan to remove or cut a turn lane into the traffic island on North Washington to allow left turns into Park Place as it will cause recurrence of the massive traffic problems that the island was installed to prevent.

8. The pedestrian access path from the City parking lot behind the development to the retail on Broad should be made obvious and easy to navigate.

9. This development should be U.S. Green Building Council LEED Gold certified.

Sincerely,

Peter Adriance, Vice President
On Behalf of the Board of Directors
Village Preservation and Improvement Society
Upcoming Events

Saturday, April 21, 1:00 p.m.—Arbor Day ceremony and tree planting, Cherry Hill Park

Sunday, April 22, 3:00 p.m.—Membership Meeting, American Legion Hall, 400 N. Oak St.

Saturday, May 12—Farmers Market VPIS booth begins

Friday, May 18, 9:00 a.m.—7:30 p.m.—Attic Treasures donations accepted, Community Center

Saturday, May 19, 9:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m.—Attic Treasures Sale, Community Center

Sunday, June 10, 3:00–5:00 p.m.—Tree Stewards and Neighborhood Tree Program reception, Kensington Building, 700B West Broad St.