

North Virginia Beach Civic League News

JANUARY 2021



PEDESTRIAN TRAFFIC IMPROVEMENTS

A BIG PROPOSAL FOR OUR SAFETY

Your North End civic league asked the city to look into what kind of traffic improvements might be made along Atlantic Avenue, and this is what the engineers came back with.

By Don Naden
NVBCL newsletter editor

The city's traffic engineers have created a plan to improve pedestrian safety and mobility from 42nd to 83rd streets in the North End. It would add crosswalks, ramps for handicapped people at crosswalks, walk lights and flashing signals. It could cost at least \$500,000 and probably would take years to finish.

The preliminary proposal, "Atlantic Avenue Pedestrian Im-

provements," was presented to the NVBCL Board of Directors in a virtual meeting Nov. 19 by city Traffic Engineer Richard Lowman, P.E.; Transportation Planning Engineer Dempsey Bruton; and Traffic Safety Engineer Valerie Henschel, P.E.

There is no estimated date to begin such a project, and it has not been funded. The study was undertaken in July at the request of the NVBCL.



"I requested a traffic improvement study July 14 to address the myriad concerns that I was hearing about Atlantic Avenue traffic," civic league President John David said. "The study commenced on approximately July 20," David said.

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These flashing LED signs are one example of crosswalk upgrades proposed by the city's pedestrian traffic-safety proposal. This image, looking north at 63rd Street, also includes a ramp, at right, and landing area, left, additions for people with disabilities.



ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENT STUDY

Upcoming civic league general meeting dates (Tuesdays, 6:30 p.m., at A.R.E.)

For 2021, tentative:
April 20, July 20, Oct. 19

Jan. 19 meeting Canceled, due to the pandemic. We will update our members via email and newsletter whether the April general membership meeting can take place.

Treasurer's report

As of late December, our civic league had 903 paid members, and our assets totaled \$41,679.82.

I would like to thank all new members for supporting our civic league and all those members who have continued to support us each year. This newsletter will have envelopes for the 2021 membership drive. Our dues are \$20 per year. You may pay by check (mailing address is on the back page of this newsletter), but you also can pay online, with PayPal, at our website, www.nvbcl.org.

A LETTER FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

Change to short-term rental rule could bring us long-term trouble

I HOPE THIS NEWSLETTER finds everyone well, and please know that you have my best wishes for a new and different year.

I am usually sad to close out another year, but this year I removed the December page from my calendar with no regrets. Hopefully, we

By John David
NVBCL president



are making progress against the virus and will see a return to

normalcy in 2021. With some luck, that will allow us to resume general membership meetings and socials. The best part of serving the civic league is seeing and conversing with members in person.

I was recently asked, "What does the civic league do?" A reasonable question. Your support of the NVBCL allows us to maintain our charter of protecting the North End's character and community. We work on a broad variety of big-picture lifestyle issues and help facilitate resolution of little ones.

One of those big-picture issues is short-term rentals. We receive a

lot of comments on STRs, and it is time for you, the members of the NVBCL, to become involved to keep the zoning essentially as it is.

The North End is covered by zoning overlay district R5RNE from the north side of 49th to 89th Street. An overlay district is a zoning tool that creates special zoning placed over existing base zoning, to identify special provisions. Those overlay provisions now are for the design and construction of smaller scale, aesthetically pleasing, detached duplex homes.

The city is proposing to add STRs to the R5RNE overlay district. STRs would then be granted "by right," without the conditional-use permit process. Significantly, the rental

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NVBCL dues have allowed us to support landscaping, bus shelters, the neighborhood welcome signs and several organizations.

Please note: If you are not receiving our emails, be sure your email address is included with your dues – and please write legibly. Many email addresses were eliminated when we switched our email service.

– Bonner Styles



Public safety phone numbers

2nd Precinct Police, 385-2700

Nonemergency police, 385-5000, option 3

Fire/police emergency, 911

PRESIDENT

From the front

frequency would change, too. The proposed change allows for 52 rentals in a calendar a year. Frequency is the issue: It can become a hotel in the summer months and then turn into a winter rental.

Obviously, such rental turnover (can you say party house?) would be highly detrimental to the North End's character and community.

The city mailed postcards to notify North End residents of two virtual public comment sessions – the first was Dec. 18, the next is scheduled for 6 p.m. Jan. 7 – on the proposed STR overlay.

Short-term rentals can affect your quality of life – it is imperative that all NVBCL members *must* take action to help us protect our neighborhood's character and community.

To attend the Jan. 7 virtual workshop, you must register in advance, online at vbgov.com/government/departments/planning/Pages/Short-Term-Rentals.aspx.

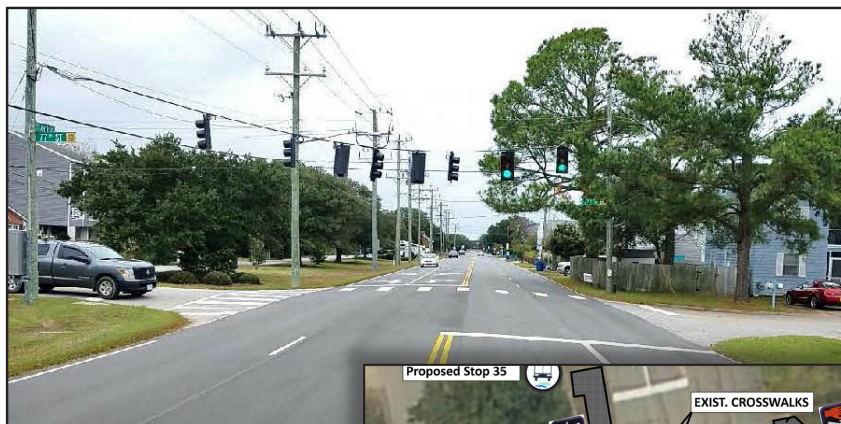
We constantly hear from our members about the traffic in the North End. We have spent a lot of effort working with the city to find a solution. You can read about this in this newsletter (*see Page 1*), and you will receive a detailed briefing from the city when general membership meetings resume.

Solving problems is what we try to do. If your trash is not picked up, for example, the NVBCL is not the proper contact. The SeeClickFix app is the correct way to address this and myriad other issues. But if your trash is repeatedly not picked up and you have a history of SeeClickFix reports, that is the time for the NVBCL to become involved on your behalf.

SeeClickFix works. When someone graffitied the North End sign in the fall, it took me two minutes to take a picture and generate a SeeClickFix report, which resolved the issue. You can get the app in the Google Play Store or in the Apple App Store.

Motorized scooters will be back in our future when we enter the governor's Virginia Forward Phase 3 pandemic guidelines. Negotiations about liability continue and must be resolved before scooter deployment. The NVBCL is actively monitor-

See **PRESIDENT**, facing page



◀ Among typical issues along Atlantic Avenue the study sites: traffic lights without pedestrian signals, at 77th Street, looking north.

▼ Improvements would add handicapped ramps and landing areas, pedestrian signals and bus stops.

STUDY

From the front

Two pedestrian accidents in the summer – one with serious injury June 17 at Bay Colony Drive and Atlantic, the other a fatality July 10 at 69th Street – were not the trigger for this study, David added.

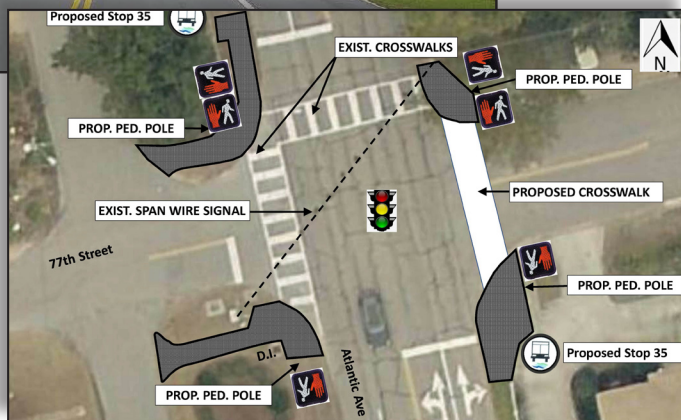
“The pedestrian accidents were coincidental. I had been planning on asking for a study. The pedestrian accidents were not the result of speed, which was the major complaint that I consistently received.”

The study concluded that 85 percent of traffic along Atlantic Avenue averages slightly faster than 40 mph – 42 to 43 – based on data recorded between 68th and 69th streets in July 2020, 2019, 2018 and 2016.

That means, of course, about 15 percent of drivers do not drive within that range. Drivers involved in the two summer crashes were not speeding, according to police reports.

The overall impact of this study falls on intersection improvements to bring crosswalks, and their ramps and landing areas, into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. The study identifies several “typical issues along the corridor” as:

- Noncompliant ADA ramps and landing areas at crosswalks;
- Unsignalized crosswalks with no signage;
- Lack of sidewalks;
- One traffic signal without pedestrian signals, 77th Street;
- Bus shelter with no crosswalk.



PHOTOS, ILLUSTRATION FROM PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENT STUDY



This is an example of non-compliant ADA ramps, at Bay Colony Drive.

Of the North End streets from 42nd to 83rd, 22 intersections are identified in the city's study as requiring some kind of improvement.

The study's criteria were these:

1. Inventory all intersections for sidewalks, bike paths, handicap ramps, crosswalks and, at signals, pedestrian accommodations.
2. Selection of intersections to be counted and reviewed: All existing traffic signal locations, all existing marked crosswalks at unsignalized intersections and locations with potential generators

of pedestrians on the west side of Atlantic and/or HRT bus stops.

3. Determine the types of improvements: All crosswalk installations need to have ADA-compliant landing areas or ramps, additional sidewalks as needed to facilitate pedestrian movements and additional traffic devices at higher-volume, unsignalized crosswalks. Such devices include LED blinking pedestrian signs, a unique addition along Atlantic Avenue.

The final criteria were the cost estimate – more than \$500,000 – and identifying potential funding sources. Those include the city's Capital Improvement Program, possible state grants, the federal Highway Safety Improvement Program and the Transportation Alternatives Program.

The study engineers suggested the project could take from three to five years but could be done in phases to expedite the work.

NVBCL President David said we would like to have the city traffic engineers present their study to the civic league's general membership, “when we are able to conduct general meetings again.”

Resolved ... to help pull the Resort out of virus hell

By Billy Almond
Resort Projects & Zoning

The Resort continues to struggle against the COVID-19 pandemic, but there are some initiatives under way that hoteliers, restaurateurs, retailers and private property owners hope will begin to improve our resort area so we can continue to be attractive for tourists in the summer.

This dismal season has motivated the Resort to move forward with the Resort Renaissance and multiple initiatives for improvement.

We brought to you in our last newsletter issue the fact that Resort leaders working with the Resort Advisory Commission drafted a resolution to ask City Council to approve and to fund multiple initiatives to improve the Resort, starting with “Atlantic Avenue,” our front door. The council approved the resolution, 11-0, and leadership is well on its way to undertaking this major task.

The basic steps in the resolution are as follows and are updated in **bold italics** based on their status:

1. That the City Council immediately re-establish a Resort Management Office in the resort area with a manager and appropriate staffing. ***The Resort Management Office is at 401 17th St. and is expected to be open soon.***

2. That the City complete the Mobility Plan called for in the Resort Area Strategic Action Plan within the next six months so the appropriate budget allocation can be made in the 2021 fiscal budget. ***The Resort Area Mobility Plan (RAMP) study is in full swing and is expected to be completed in the spring.***

3. That the City re-initiate Friendship Patrols in conjunction with local churches and increase Atlantic Avenue entertainment programming to maintain a safe and friendly atmosphere for visitors and residents alike. ***This is being set up in the new Resort Management Office.***

4. That the City implement a customer-friendly parking plan with guidelines and hours of operation with public and private lots that put public safety as a top priority. ***Parking policy is a part of the RAMP study and is expected to be completed in the spring.***

5. Authorize the Resort Management Office to implement immediate and continuing maintenance actions that can address the growing list of areas in need of immediate assistance. ***These enhanced maintenance operations will be managed out of the Resort Management Office.***

6. That the City provide adequate resources to increase police presence on Atlantic Avenue. ***In a recent Resort Advisory Commission meeting, the new police chief, Paul Neudigate, it was very clear that the needs of the Second Precinct are one of his top priorities. He came to us from Cincinnati, where he had extensive experience in dealing with large, festive crowds with the NFL Bengals and MLB Reds.***

7. That the City Council and Resort Advisory Commission develop a Revitalization Program for Atlantic Avenue infrastructure improvements that reflect the art, history and culture of Virginia Beach and will be funded in budget years 2021-2025. ***The Resort Advisory Commission, along with the SGA office, will advance the elements of the Resort Area Strategic Action Plan as soon as the RAMP study is completed.***

The Strategic Growth Area office recently hosted a community webinar on the ViBe District and 17th Street Redevelopment Area. It can be found here: www.vbgov.com/government/departments/sga/projects/Documents/17th_Street_CIW_Presentation_11-18-20.pdf

We ask that during the off season you support the resort restaurants and other businesses. They have barely survived a very dismal season and now head into the next without much hope. Please, do your part to help!



TREE PRESERVATION

A pat on the back, with a plaque

Chris Ettel, president of VB Homes, was recognized in October by the Friends of Live Oaks for protecting live oaks and other trees during a house construction project at the North End.

Friends of Live Oaks, a local nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and planting live oak trees, presented a plaque to Ettel during a ceremony Oct. 14 at the building site, 74th Street and Atlantic Avenue.

The live oak is the official tree of the City of Virginia Beach, and VB Homes installed special fencing with signs attached to protect them while several houses were being built.

“We have made an effort to save live oaks over the years,” Ettel said, “but this is the first time we used chain-link fencing and put ‘Tree Preservation Area’



Chris Ettel of VBHomes, left, receives a plaque in October from Elisa Morrell, secretary, and Clay Bernick, executive director, of Friends of Live Oaks.



signs on it.” The fences keep trees safe from construction equipment by preventing soil compaction and

root damage, along with trunk and branch damage.

The friends group awarded Ettel a certificate framed in live oak wood salvaged from a tree that had to be removed from a construction site where it could not be protected.

The Friends group was organized about a decade ago to help advocate for the iconic live oaks, which do

not grow much farther north than Virginia Beach.

The sturdy trees are known for standing strong against hurricanes and flooding. They are called live oaks because, unlike most other oaks, they don't lose all their leaves in winter.

— Mary Reid Barrow
North End neighbor, Live Oaks member

BEAUTIFICATION HAIKU



Median mulched for winter
Newer trees coming in March
Currently dormant

... says it all.

— Jimsan Spruance
Beautification Committee

PRESIDENT

From previous page

ing the scooter issue, despite the program's challenges, to ensure that the eventual deployment will not be a headache for our members.

I mentioned parking in the fall newsletter and expect that issue to be raised in the spring. You can expect another call to action from your civic league then. The pilot parking program enjoyed by the Cavalier Shores Historic Community comes up for renewal in March.

The program restricts parking in front of the homes in the area west of Atlantic Avenue (42nd to 45th streets) to three hours, despite those residents having parking and access through the alley in the rear of their homes. Restricting the street parking in Cav Shores does nothing but drive the parking problem farther north, impacting NVBCL members' lives. The burdens of parking should be borne equally by all city citizens.

I would like to extend my personal thanks to you for being a member of the civic league. Because of your membership, we have a strong voice with the City of Virginia Beach. We will continue to use that voice to the best of our abilities to preserve the character and community of the North End. I look forward to welcoming you and personally thanking you at a general membership meeting soon.



North Virginia Beach Civic League News

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More information, including postal addresses, is listed on our website, NVBCL.org.

HOSPITALITY

2020 was a bust, yes, but we have plans for this new year!

By Monica Stein
Hospitality

Hard to believe it's been only one year since our last NVBCL Social. It was at the Hunt Room – the fire was roaring, and more than 50 residents attended, got to pay their membership dues and had a blast. Our Hospitality Committee had so much planned for 2020 to keep our community in touch, but COVID-19 had other plans.

Meanwhile, 2021 is looking good – vaccines are on the way as we write this. As soon as the governor and Dr. Fauci give their



MONICA STEIN | NVBCL

More than 50 folks turned out at our last social, in the Hunt Room.

blessings, we will continue where we left off.

We have lots planned for 2021 including quarterly socials at local venues like the Surf Club Ocean Grille in the Wyndham Hotel

and at Graze Kitchen, 67th Street at the A.R.E. Center. And we plan to have our annual Full Moon Party in September, at the Oceanfront Marriott or PACC.

So stay tuned, stay current on your NVBCL membership (we need your support), get involved and attend our general meetings as soon as we are responsibly able to resume them.

We look forward to seeing you soon. If you have any ideas for social events we can entertain, please feel free to get in touch. Happy New Year!

IN MEMORIAM

“Turtle Lady” was a “force of nature”

By Stacy Parker
The Virginian-Pilot

It took 10 years for Marian Childress to find her first loggerhead turtle nest in Virginia Beach.

Ten years of early morning nest patrols that yielded plenty of beautiful sunrises and dolphin sightings, but no telltale signs a loggerhead had dragged herself out of the surf and up the beach, she told *The Virginian-Pilot* in 2012.

Then, one day, she saw sand flying. The mother turtle was still there, covering her eggs. It was one of the highlights of her volunteer career.

Childress, a retired



THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT

Marian Childress

teacher and North End resident who held the Virginia Aquarium's record for most hours volunteered, died Aug. 23 after a long illness. She was 78.

“I was amazed she was willing to put in that much time and work and effort,” said her husband, Gentry, who volunteered with her to watch over nests.

Fondly known as the “Turtle Lady,” Childress combed the beach every morning at dawn from mid-May to the end of August for the Virginia Aquarium's Stranding Response Team. In all, Childress volunteered 16,256 hours and 54 minutes over 17 years. She stopped last year when her health deteriorated.

“She had that joy of life and that thrill of taking on new challenges,” said Mark Swingle, the aquarium's chief of research and conservation.

“She was a force of nature,” aquarium scientist Sue Barco said. “I really miss her.”

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BEACHES



DON NADEN | NVBCL

OUTFALL FALLOUT

Remember the “mini Grand Canyon” that flowing storm water carved across the beach at 79th Street? We ran this photo in our October newsletter, explaining that one of two outfall pumps had failed, and

the city's Public Works Dept. hadn't been able to get the parts needed to repair it. As of Dec. 8, it still hadn't, Beach Operations reported. Whether the “canyon” reappears probably depends on how much rainfall we get, says Ron Pearson, chairman of our Beaches Committee.