

The Virginia Hills Echo

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September 2012

Traffic Changes at the Light at Telegraph Road and South Kings Highway



No turns sign at the light at South Kings and Telegraph Road

Fairfax County police have been concerned by the rush hour backups on southbound Telegraph Road at its intersection with South Kings Highway, and the County asked VDOT to see what could be done about the backups. VDOT determined that they were caused by southbound vehicles trying to turn left onto South Kings. When there are more turning vehicles than will fit into the turn lane (which traffic engineers would call a stacking lane), the vehicles stack in the through lane, preventing vehicles staying southbound on Telegraph from getting through.

When VDOT wants to do something, it does it very quickly. The turn restrictions and the resetting of the traffic signal to keep the turn arrow on red during the no-turn periods did happen very quickly this summer, and
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The Real Estate Market in Virginia Hills

Recent real estate data for Virginia Hills supports national trends in real estate that report rising prices due to fewer properties being available on the market.

Data provided by Jimmy Tucker from the Metropolitan Regional Information System shows that active listings in Virginia Hills are well below normal. As of September 1st, there are only five properties for sale in Virginia Hills, whereas in September 2011, there were 10 active listings. National real estate commentators have speculated on a number of reasons that this may be so. Foreclosures may have slowed due to legal scrutiny of foreclosure proceedings and increased refinancing opportunities offered by some banks. Sellers may still be withholding properties from the market until prices rise.

It is difficult to determine exactly how much prices are rising because the homes that sold in one year may be of higher or lower quality than homes that sell in another. However, it appears that over the last year prices have risen from the mid to high \$300 thousands to the low \$400 thousands. While this is still not close to the roughly \$500,000 that an average Virginia Hills home sold for in 2006-07, it is substantially up from the high \$200 to low \$300 thousands where such a home sold for in 2008-09.

Virginia Hills is still a bargain compared to Fairfax County in general. Data provided by Williams Realty shows the average list price for homes under \$1 million in the County was \$639,036 (arithmetic average) or \$618,000 (median). The average time on the market was 72 days.

While mortgage rates have plummeted in the last year, many borrowers are finding it difficult to obtain a mortgage. The situation in Fairfax County is better than in most of the United States because of the low rate of unemployment

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Virginia Hills Citizens Association Meeting

**Tuesday, September 11th – 7:30 PM
Old Virginia Hills School, Diana Lane**

Speaker: State Delegate Mark Sickles

The President's Corner
Comment from VHCA President Ralph Zecca



As the season begins to change and our children start off on a new school year, the Virginia Hills Citizens Association (VHCA) starts out on a new fiscal year. We will all soon be putting away our summer clothes, raking our lawns and, before you know it, it will be the holiday

season! As the saying goes, time flies when you are having fun.

Just imagine how much more fun it would be if you were a member of the VHCA! The VHCA offers everyone an opportunity to meet with neighbors and friends to discuss issues of concern and/or interest. It offers opportunities to socialize and make an impact on your local community. VHCA will be sending its membership letter in the coming month asking you to join.

Membership is inexpensive. In fact some of you have already signed up -- so please disregard if you have! For those of you that have not joined, please take a moment to consider joining. Membership is what you make of it. We have some members who merely fill out the form and do nothing until the next year. We have others that volunteer to help out with committees and other activities. It is all on your pace and schedule.

In the meantime, I wish you all the best and hope to see you not only around the neighborhood, but even at a few of our meetings!

With sincerest respect,

- Ralph Zecca

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Real Estate in Virginia Hills

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(4.2% in July vs. 8.3% for the United States as a whole), and because of the comparatively high incomes of many borrowers who work in this area. Income and credit scores are now the primary means for determining eligibility for a mortgage.

One of the biggest dangers to the Northern Virginia market is the "fiscal cliff." Defense cuts on January 1st and the resultant loss of jobs could have a decidedly negative effect on the number of people looking for housing, looking to trade up, or able to obtain financing.

Disclaimer: This article is not intended as advice on how or when to buy or sell real estate. If you want such advice, you should contact a licensed real estate professional.

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Virginia Hills Citizens Association Officers 2010-2012		
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Members for the New 2012-2013 Membership Year

In the June Echo, Virginia Hills residents were encouraged to get a jump on the membership year that began on September 1st. The following did so:

George & Lee Ann Alloway, Cynthia Blaine, Doug & Donna Boulter, Pete & Betty Galbaugh, Bob Gorman, Sandra Lindsay, Charles & Dorothy Macan, Richard & Frances Mays, Marie Moore & Robyn Jordan, Norman Spurling & Nancy Tresp, Guntis & Inta Sraders, George & Judith Stone, Rudolph & Juanita Tarlosky, Robin Welsh, Rose Marie Wiegel, Ralph & Akiko Zecca.

We Want You Back!

It's a new fiscal year for the Virginia Hills Citizens Association. Since VHCA does not have a membership director for the year, the VHCA executive committee has decided that, until a new director can be found, it will do membership by committee -- each officer will work on membership. The VHCA officers are determined not to lose the momentum that was gained last year.

A thorough scrub of the historical membership records reveal that there are over 200 families currently living in Virginia Hills who are past members of the Association. Some were members last year. A few haven't rejoined since 2004. VHCA wants you back. **We want you all back!!**

We understand. If there's no crisis in the neighborhood, it's easy to forget to pay dues and maintain membership. But one of the main reasons there have been no crises in Virginia Hills is that our neighborhood has a vigilant citizens association that has worked hard to identify and avoid problems rather than react to them once they have become crises (when it's often too late to do anything about them).

The strength of VHCA's voice is in the number of families in the community it has as members. We want you back. Virginia Hills needs you back!

New Residents, We Want You Too

Why be a member of VHCA? The \$7.00 annual dues (unchanged since 1991) help pay for the landscaping of the traffic islands on Telegraph Road and Ronson Drive. Dues support capital projects such as the playground behind the Old School and the replacement of the sign lighting anticipated for this fall. And your dues help pay for the administration of the association.

Want to know how your dues are spent? Look at the budget page on the Virginia Hills web site.

2012-2013 Membership

Mail to: VHCA, P.O. Box 10837,
Alexandria, VA 22310

I'd (We'd) like to join / renew my (our) membership in the Virginia Hills Citizens Association. Enclosed are the annual membership dues of \$7.00 per household. I am also including a contribution in the amount of

\$ _____.

Name (s) _____

Address _____

City _____

Zip Code _____

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Comments: _____

Checks for dues may be made payable to VHCA or the Virginia Hills Citizens Association.

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www.VirginiaHills.org

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Telegraph Road and South Kings

(continued from page 1)

without formal notification to the nearby communities. VDOT says that the no-turn restrictions are exploratory and that this is only a test to see if the restrictions alleviate the problem.

As drivers learn that they can't turn, and stop getting into the turn lane, it seems likely that the restrictions will fix the problem. Drivers who would normally turn will seek alternate routes, most likely be Dorset Drive and The Parkway. To some extent, drivers may have already been doing so out of frustration with the backups.

Unfortunately, neither VDOT nor FCDOT thought to do traffic counts on the two alternate routes through Virginia Hills before imposing the restrictions, so it is impossible to determine whether the community is seeing a significant increase in traffic on those two routes. VHCA President Ralph Zecca says that VHCA will monitor cut through traffic to see if the volume is increasing.

The reconstruction of the South Kings, Telegraph, and Van Dorn intersections will fix the problem of cars stacking for a left turn, but completion of that project may be two years in the future.

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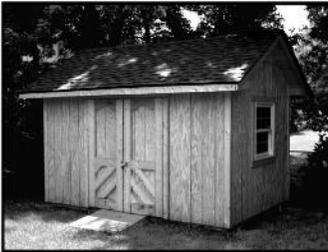


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View from the Hills

Doug Boulter's Advice on Home Repair:

Driveway Replacement



Does your driveway need replacing? Is it cracked, especially around the edges? Has it heaved or buckled? Does it just look bad? Is it beyond patching? If so you may want to start from scratch, or almost scratch, and replace it.

The secret to a long-lived driveway is a good base of crushed stone with good drainage. If the driveway is in really bad shape, or if you're going to make it wider, longer, or both, you will at least have to get a good base under the new parts, and it might be worth it to have the old material torn up and a new base installed.

Materials

The least expensive material for a driveway is asphalt. While it has a relatively short life and is more susceptible to cracks and depressions, the good news is that by milling off an inch or two from the surface, installing a membrane, and laying new asphalt, if your base is good, you may get more life out of your new driveway than you would expect. The secret is the membrane. While it has been used on roads for years, it hasn't been applied to driveways until fairly recently.

Concrete is a more expensive option that, if designed correctly and given a good base, will have the longest life of any driveway. You can use brick borders or inlays to get creative designs. Pressure washing will keep it looking good.

Brick, either laid on concrete or sand using mortar or sand will be the most expensive and the most decorative. The biggest problem with brick is that it will be very difficult to shovel or blow the snow off it because the surface will tend to be uneven. Eventually, weeds will grow between the cracks and will have to be dealt with on a regular basis.

Porous paving and pavers allow water to pass through them and into the soil. This is the best solution for the environment because it reduces storm water runoff. However, the pavers may ultimately work their way out of level, and the paving may have a shorter life than asphalt. Building a driveway with these materials will make you something of the test subject for the method you choose. Be sure to hire a knowledgeable installer.

Considerations

Can the driveway be saved. Many asphalt installers who routinely work for homeowners can also fill cracks, patch holes and depressions, and coat the driveway. That can

give you many more years of service if done before major damage is done, or it can give a few more years of service if the driveway is near the end of its life. The cost will be about ¼ of the cost of repaving and even less than that for replacing the asphalt with concrete. You can also do this yourself, particularly if you don't have a large driveway.

Do you have the typical narrow Virginia Hills driveway? If you park your car in the middle of the drive, do both you and your passenger have to step out onto the wet and muddy grass if it's raining? If so, consider adding 18" to 24" to each side of the driveway so you have a hard surface on which to step when you exit your vehicle.

If you're having a concrete driveway done, talk to the installer about joints. Concrete greater than a certain area will crack, no matter how good the base. Good installers will create joints in the concrete so that when the cracks occur, they will coincide with the joints and won't be noticeable. You shouldn't have to ask for them and they shouldn't cost you extra.

Whatever the kind of driveway, ensure that the installer builds a crown into the driveway so that water will run off the side(s) instead of standing in the middle.

Finally, talk to the installer about the transitions between the new driveway and the sidewalk going into your house, the public sidewalk, and the apron at the curb cut where the driveway runs into the street. You want these places to be all the same height so you don't create a tripping hazard and the water doesn't pool there.

Maintenance

The key to keeping your new driveway looking good is to keep it clean, particularly from oil leaks, and to do battle with the weeds. If a crack develops, immediately pull any weeds, apply a weed killer like Roundup to the bare soil, and use a crack filler (available for concrete and asphalt). Once seeds and roots establish themselves in a crack, weeds can grow through crack filler and make the crack larger.

If you have an asphalt driveway, seal about every four years depending on wear and appearance. Powerwash concrete when it starts to seriously look dirty.

A good driveway replacement and regular maintenance will pay off in appearance and longevity. The cost and effort will be worth it.

Welcome to our new advertiser, Oak Grove Builders.

November Election Information

The November general election will be held on Tuesday, November 6th. Because of the elimination of the Wilton Precinct, all residents of Virginia Hills are now in the Virginia Hills Precinct and will vote at the old Virginia Hills School on Diana Lane off Dorset Drive. On the ballot are President and Vice President, U.S. Senator, and Member of Congress.

There are two amendments to the Virginia Constitution, one on eminent domain and one on scheduling of legislative sessions. Complete information on the amendments is available on line by following the link <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/elections/upcoming.htm> to the State Board of Elections site.

There are also four County bond issues for parks, libraries, public safety, and storm drainage up for voter approval. More information can be found using the link on the page listed above.

Absentee-in-person voting will take place at satellite locations, including the Franconia Governmental Center, October 17 - November 3, Monday - Friday, 2:00 PM to 8:00 PM and Saturdays, 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM. Virginia does not have early voting. Anyone voting absentee must give one of the legally valid reasons for not being able to vote on election day.

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Message from Supervisor McKay

I've been thinking a lot about emergencies lately—a derecho, four days without power in a heat wave with two small kids, and a flooded kitchen floor will do that to you. So will a magnitude 5.8 earthquake such as the one we experienced last August. In this part of the country, we're accustomed to weather emergencies that give a few days' notice—with hurricanes and snow storms there's usually time to make a store run, secure loose items around the house, and alter travel plans. Garden variety thunderstorms are a normal part of our summers and any power outages are usually short. The derecho (violent straight line thunderstorms with the power of tornados) that roared into our area on June 29 was something else entirely and a sharp reminder of what nature can do to our infrastructure. I'd say we've had a loud wake-up call to government at all levels, to utilities, and most of all, to us as individuals to plan for the unexpected.

Back in the days and months after the 9/11 terrorist attack you couldn't read a news story or turn on the TV without hearing about family emergency plans. Many of us put those plans in place and then as the years rolled by without incident, those plans and emergency kits gathered dust and got shuttled off to a closet somewhere. Emergencies come in many different forms and some of the most damaging have natural causes.

Now would be a good time to dust off and replenish those emergency kits and communication plans.

Fairfax County's web page has a lot of useful information at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/residents>. If you go to <http://family.readynova.com> you'll be guided through creating a family emergency plan. It'll be a half hour well spent that could save you hours and days later.

If I could ask for just one thing, it's for every Fairfax County resident to sign up for the County's CEAN (Community Emergency Alert Network) text alert system. This system delivers important alerts, notifications, and updates during a major crisis or emergency, in addition to day-to-day notices about weather and traffic. You can sign up online at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/cean. Messages will be delivered to all devices you register, including email accounts, cell phones, text pagers, satellite phones, and wireless devices.

This is information that I hope you'll never need to use but it can help you to sleep better at night knowing you're well prepared.

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Recent Virginia Hills Real Estate Market Activity

Status	Style	Address	BR	FB	HB	List Price	Close Price	Bsmt	Gar
ACTIVE	Rambler	6608 Berkshire Dr	2	1	0	\$317,000		Yes	
ACTIVE	Contemporary	6320 Gentele Ct	5	3	1	\$409,000		Yes	
ACTIVE	Rambler	3713 Austin Ave	3	2	0	\$379,900		Yes	
ACTIVE	Colonial	6503 Berkshire Dr	4	2	0	\$379,900		No	
CNTG/KO	Colonial	6309 Gentele Ct	3	1	1	\$220,000		Yes	
CNTG/NO KO	Rambler	3515 Pike Rd	4	2	0	\$270,000		Yes	
CNTG/NO KO	Rambler	6407 Ronson Ct	3	2	1	\$425,000		Yes	
CNTG/NO KO	Split Level	3717 Austin Ave	4	2	0	\$349,000		Yes	
SOLD	Other	6211 Sandlin Ct	3	4	0	\$375,000	\$320,000	Yes	
SOLD	Rambler	6549 Virginia Hills Ave	3	2	0	\$374,900	\$365,000	No	
SOLD	Bilevel	6211 Telegraph Rd	3	2	0	\$395,000	\$408,000	Yes	
SOLD	Colonial	6401 Gentele Ct	4	2	0	\$365,000	\$365,000	Yes	
SOLD	Rambler	6213 Hillview Ave	4	3	0	\$429,000	\$425,000	Yes	1
SOLD	Raised Rambler	6126 Hillview Ave	4	2	0	\$379,900	\$390,000	Yes	1
SOLD	Rambler	6325 Gentele Ct	4	2	0	\$304,500	\$307,500	Yes	
SOLD	Raised Rambler	6311 Gentele Ct	4	2	0	\$429,900	\$420,000	Yes	
SOLD	Rambler	6505 Hillview Ave	3	2	1	\$349,900	\$355,000	No	1
SOLD	Raised Rambler	6500 Virginia Hills Ave	3	2	0	\$359,900	\$355,000	Yes	
SOLD	Rambler	6408 Wilcox Ct	3	1	1	\$325,000	\$325,000	Yes	
SOLD	Raised Rambler	6317 Telegraph Rd	3	2	0	\$354,900	\$347,000	Yes	
WITHDRAWN	Rancher	6610 The Parkway	5	2	0	\$399,000		Yes	
WITHDRAWN	Colonial	6503 Berkshire Dr	4	2	0	\$385,000		No	
WITHDRAWN	Rambler	3613 Heather Ct	3	1	0	\$349,000		No	

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