

August 2008 Newsletter

New Farmers' Market at Upper King Street Station

The Upper King Street Farmers' Market opens for business this month. The new Market is located at King Street Gardens Park, just a few steps from the King Street Metro, and will be open every Wednesday through October 29 from 3PM to 7PM. It is well worth a visit for Colecroft Station residents interested in fresh, locally-grown produce, home-made goods and bakery items.

Re-flashing Repairs Completed on the 610 Tower

Re-flashing at the base of the 610 Tower was completed and successfully passed a 24-hour continuous flood-test. The brickwork on the 610 patios, disturbed to provide access for the repair, is currently being restored. Re-flashing at the base of the 505 Tower has begun, and should be completed in October. Restoration of landscaping damaged or removed from around the 545 and 610 Towers during re-flashing of those buildings has begun, and will be completed with the planting of trees and ground cover when the weather cools sufficiently to be less stressful for the new plants.

High Definition Satellite Reception

Fairfax Antenna has completed installation of new satellite dishes on the roofs of our Towers. The new dishes are capable of receiving signals from five satellites. Direct TV subscribers may choose their preferred programming package from Direct TV and acquire a basic High Definition Direct TV receiver or an upgraded High Definition Direct TV receiver that will permit recording of one show while viewing another.

Anthrax Mail Screening Concerns

Residents have expressed concern about reports of US Senate mail screening for anthrax at the Security Storage Warehouse on Payne Street, between Wythe and Pendleton Streets. As background for those not following this issue closely, the Federal Government leased the Security Storage Warehouse on Payne Street in recent years to process mail addressed to the US Senate. Subsequent to the 2001 anthrax incidents, which occurred in New York, Connecticut and in DC, the Federal Government changed mail screening procedures at all facilities processing mail for the US House and Senate.

Mark Jinks, Alexandria's Deputy City Manager, reports that mail processed for the US Senate at the Payne Street warehouse had already been irradiated to kill possible anthrax spores at a separate facility, located outside the City, before it ever reached the Security Storage Warehouse. Protocols used to sort the irradiated US Senate mail at the Payne Street site were developed by the Alexandria Fire Department in co-operation with the US Capitol Police. In the unlikely event of an incident occurring at the Security Storage Warehouse, the Capital Hill Police Hazmat unit was programmed to respond, to keep

chain-of-custody clear for prosecution. Alexandria Fire Department Battalion Chief North, who is the Department's Hazmat lead, reports that no incidents were ever reported to the Alexandria Fire Department from the Payne Street site, as would be required under the established protocol. In any event, US Senate mail-sorting at the Security Storage Warehouse ceased nearly a year ago because the land is planned for re-development.

Congratulations, Jefferson Houston Elementary School!

Alexandria City Public Schools proudly announced on August 1 that three additional schools made **Adequate Yearly Progress** (as determined by the Federal *No Child Left Behind Act*) during the 2007-08 school year, even as required pass rates increased by 4 percent. One of the three schools is Jefferson Houston Elementary, in our own neighborhood. This is very good news. A well-functioning neighborhood elementary school is not only vital to the children educated there, but essential to stability and owner equity in the neighborhood.

James Bland Public Housing Re-development Plan

A major theme at the August meeting of the ARHA Redevelopment Work Group was a concern that neighborhood residents might derail fast-tracking of the James Bland Public Housing Re-development Plan and crimp profit margins with demands for adjustments in building height, mass, density, parking, front yards and open space, location of public housing.

ARHA Vice-Chairman Connie Ring remarked that "different tensions are inherent in Planning. Some will be in opposition to each other, but we have to find compromise." The Vice-Chairman was the only Work Group member willing to acknowledge that neighborhood community input was not only legitimate, but to be expected.

The good news is that the City Planning & Zoning staff seems to have taken to heart neighborhood criticism of the density proposed in the draft Bland Public Housing Re-development Plan, and suggested increasing open space by removing two to six market rate units from the Plan and by creating a new pocket-park on Wythe Street or, alternatively, expanding the larger open space now planned for Montgomery Street and turning that into a City park. When developer Bob Youngentob expressed concerns about the lost profit opportunities, Council Member Rob Krupicka responded that the City and ARHA weren't in for any rebates if profits fell but that the City needed to balance public with private benefits.

The bottom line appears to be that the City and ARHA would like to push the Bland Public Housing Re-development Plan through as quickly as possible and with as little dissent as possible. It seems clear that we and other Parker-Gray neighborhood groups will need to keep pressuring our elected representatives to ensure that the end result of this huge re-development project will enhance owner equity and quality of life.

Miscellaneous Housekeeping

- Please be careful of wet paint on handrails, doors, lamp-posts, yellow-lines in the garage and on other surfaces. Staff and contractors are extensively re-painting common elements, a process that is expected to continue into the fall.