



Richmond City Council

The Voice of the People

Richmond, Virginia

Office of the Council Chief of Staff

Land Use, Housing, & Transportation Standing Committee

July 21, 2026

Legislative Summary

Previous Meeting: June 16, 2026

Next Meeting: September 22, 2026

Legistar Link: [City of Richmond - Meeting of Land Use, Housing and Transportation Standing Committee on 7/21/2026 at 3:00 PM](#)

Agenda Overview:

Presentations:

- **Housing and Community Development:** Disposition of Surplus City-Owned Properties for Affordable Housing

Six Papers for Consideration:

1. [Ord. 2026-113](#) Establish exemptions from vegetation regulations for Virginia Friendly Landscapes.
2. [Ord. 2026-166](#) Amend the Master Plan to incorporate the Oak Grove Hillside Bellemeade Community Plan
3. [Res. 2026-R024](#) Initiate a planning and preservation study for the Westwood neighborhood.
4. [Res. 2026-R026](#) Support Chesterfield County SMART SCALE Round 7 projects
5. [Res. 2026-R027](#) Support Henrico County SMART SCALE Round 7 projects
6. [Res. 2026-R029](#) Request the execution of the Joint Gilpin Transformation Working Group Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Richmond and the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority

Other Business:

- Board Vacancy [Appointments](#)
- Adoption of Committee [Presentation Schedule](#) 2026-2027

Next Meeting Preview (Tues, 9/16):

- **Department of Economic Development (DED):** Real Estate Reports
- **Housing and Community Development (HCD) and Aging and Disability Services (ADS):** Seniors and Housing: Aging in Place

Presentation: Housing and Economic Development – Michelle Peters

Council Staff Summary and Notes:

- The program provides a 15-year partial tax exemption for qualifying rehabilitation of older affordable-housing properties.
- Eligible properties must generally be at least 20 years old, meet rehabilitation thresholds, and reserve at least 30% of units for households at or below 80% AMI.
- HCD has received 20 applications; 13 were approved, seven were ineligible, and four completed properties currently receive the exemption.
- The report attributes 428 units to participating projects: 234 preserved and 194 created.
- HCD recommends no immediate changes while it coordinates a future review with the commercial rehabilitation tax-abatement program.
- The report does not clearly identify completed projects, fiscal cost, tenant outcomes, or the effects of ending the broader residential program.

Council Staff Questions:

Program Results

1. How do the reported 428 units relate to the four completed properties, and how many are currently occupied and affordability-restricted?
2. Can HCD provide a property-level summary of all applications, including status, units, affordability levels, rehabilitation cost, and exemption value?

Fiscal Impact and Effectiveness

3. What is the annual and 15-year cost of the exemptions, including cost per affordable unit?
4. Does HCD determine whether projects would have proceeded without the exemption?
5. What evidence shows the program has reduced vacancy, blight, or derelict buildings?

Affordability and Enforcement

6. How long are affordability requirements enforced, and what happens after a sale, rent increase, change in use, or compliance failure?
7. Were tenants displaced during rehabilitation, and have any exemptions been terminated or recaptured?

Demolition and Preservation

8. Does the exemption prevent future demolition?
9. Has the City considered requiring a preservation covenant, demolition restriction, or repayment of tax benefits?
10. Has the City Attorney evaluated whether state law permits those conditions?

Effects of the 2020 Program Change

11. How did ending the broader residential rehabilitation exemption affect derelict buildings and rehabilitation activity?
12. What has been the effect on small residential properties and naturally occurring affordable housing?
13. Could Richmond offer a smaller exemption for rehabilitation of derelict or lower-cost housing while retaining the strongest benefit for income-restricted projects?

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT REVIEW & OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY

1. Ordinance No. 2026-113

Patron Mayor Avula

** Patron expected to introduce an amendment*

Title: To amend City Code § 11-105, concerning weeds and other vegetation, and to amend ch. 11, art. IV, by adding therein a new section numbered 11-101, concerning definitions, for the purpose of establishing exemptions for Virginia Friendly Landscapes.

Council Staff Notes:

- This proposal is intended to align with Richmond 300, RVAgreen 2050, the Richmond Sustainable Design Standards, and the City's Bee City USA commitments.
- The primary purpose of the ordinance is to recognize and protect intentionally managed native landscapes and exempt them from tall grass code enforcement.

The Amendment:

- Replaces the broader Virginia Friendly Landscapes framework with a more straightforward exemption for native plants.
- Removes the requirements for National Wildlife Federation certification and registration with the City.
- Adds a definition of native plants to City Code.
- Adds native plants to the vegetation exempt from the general height restriction.
- Allows properly managed woody debris to be maintained as wildlife habitat.
- Establishes visible indicators of intentional stewardship to distinguish maintained native landscapes from unmanaged vegetation.

Council Staff Questions:

1. How will the City share native landscaping as an affordable, lower-maintenance, and drought-tolerant option with communities that have historically had less access to environmental programs and resources?
2. Will outreach prioritize neighborhoods with high vegetation citations, limited tree canopy, or greater exposure to heat and flooding?
3. How could the Office of Sustainability partner with other City teams and the City partner with trusted community organizations, libraries, schools, faith communities, and affordable-housing providers to conduct outreach?
4. What would it take for the City offer free plants, starter kits, demonstrations, or hands-on assistance to reduce upfront barriers?
5. How will the City ensure residents receive clear guidance and an opportunity to correct issues before enforcement action is taken?

2. Ordinance No. 2026-166

Patron Mayor Avula

Title: To approve an amendment to the Master Plan for the City of Richmond, adopted by the City Planning Commission on Oct. 5, 2020, and approved by the City Council by Ord. No. 2020-236, adopted Dec. 14, 2020, to incorporate the Oak Grove Hillside Bellemeade Community Plan detailing the vision, guiding principles, goals, strategies, and big moves for development of and public investment in the Oak Grove, Hillside, and Bellemeade neighborhoods.

Council Staff Notes:

- The ordinance adopts the October 2025 Oak Grove, Hillside, and Bellemeade Community Plan as an amendment to Richmond 300.
- The plan is intended to guide future development, public investment, and policy decisions in the three Southside neighborhoods.
- The central approach is to direct growth toward Commerce Road and Richmond Highway while preserving the residential character of the interior neighborhoods.
- Priorities include preventing displacement, expanding housing options, attracting corridor businesses, improving walking, biking and transit connections, and addressing environmental and infrastructure needs.
- The planning process began in 2022 and included a resident planning team, public meetings, stakeholder discussions, community tours, and surveys in English and Spanish.
- Adoption does not immediately appropriate funding, but the plan recommends future City investments and implementation actions across multiple departments

Council Staff Questions:

1. What actions are expected within the first one to two years, and which departments will be responsible?
2. Which recommendations already have funding, and which will require future operating or capital appropriations?
3. How will the City measure whether the plan is preventing displacement and benefiting longtime residents?
4. How will implementation be coordinated with Hillside Court redevelopment, Code Refresh, transportation projects, and infrastructure planning?
5. Will Council receive regular progress reports identifying completed actions, delays, funding gaps, and neighborhood outcomes?

MISCELLANEOUS

3. Resolution No. 2026-R024

Patron Councilmember Breton

** Patron expected to introduce an amendment*

Title: To request that the Chief Administrative Officer cause the Department of Planning and Development Review to (i) collaborate with the residents of and stakeholders in the Westwood neighborhood, bordered by Dunbar Street, Patterson Avenue, and Glenburnie Road, to evaluate and recommend appropriate land use, zoning, and policy tools, , and (ii) develop community-informed design guidelines and strategies to preserve the cultural and historic character of the Westwood neighborhood and support neighborhood stability, and (iii) provide a written report of such findings and recommendations.

Council Staff Summary and Notes:

- The resolution requests a community-driven planning process focused on the historic Westwood neighborhood.
- The study would evaluate zoning tools, overlays, design standards, anti-displacement strategies, infrastructure investments, and preservation approaches.
- The resolution specifically identifies options such as special zoning districts, design overlays, Old and Historic designation, and other preservation mechanisms.
- The requested report would include recommendations related to housing stability, transportation, stormwater infrastructure, and community priorities.
- Findings and recommendations would be returned to Council and Planning Commission within 180 days following adoption.

The Amendment:

- Expands and clarifies the study area to include the neighborhood from ***Dunbar Street to Glenburnie Road and from Stokes Lane to the north side of Patterson Avenue***.
- Adds more detail about Westwood's origins as a post-emancipation Black community and its history of homeownership, civic organizing, and resistance to displacement.
- Strengthens the findings related to Westwood's civil-rights and educational history.
- Replaces the proposed study of a special low-density zoning district with consideration of a design, historic, or other zoning overlay.
- Adds community stability to the study's goals and calls for coordination with other City departments on housing, infrastructure, economic development, and parks.
- Retains the requirement for a written report with recommendations within 180 days.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

4. Resolution No. 2026-R026

Patron Mayor Avula

Title: To express the City Council's support for and request the Commonwealth Transportation Board to provide funding for Chesterfield County's SMART SCALE Round 7 candidate projects for 2026.

Council Staff Notes:

- The resolution provides Richmond's required support for three Chesterfield County transportation funding applications that cross or affect the City boundary.
- The proposed projects involve:
 - Route 60 and Route 150 interchange improvements.
 - Fall Line Trail improvements along Route 1 between Walmsley Boulevard and Falling Creek Avenue.
 - Route 150 and Route 360 interchange improvements.
- SMART SCALE is Virginia's competitive process for evaluating and funding transportation projects based on factors such as safety, congestion, accessibility, economic development, and environmental quality.
- Adoption supports Chesterfield's applications but does not itself appropriate City funding

Council Staff Questions:

1. What portions of these projects are within Richmond or directly affect City residents?
2. Does Richmond anticipate any local match, right-of-way, utility, maintenance, or operating responsibility?
3. How do the projects support Richmond's Fall Line Trail, transit, Vision Zero, and Southside access priorities?
4. Were any design concerns or requested conditions communicated to Chesterfield before the resolution was introduced?

5. Resolution No. 2026-R027

Patron Mayor Avula

Title: To express the City Council's support for and request the Commonwealth Transportation Board to provide funding for Henrico County's SMART SCALE Round 7 candidate projects for 2026.

Council Staff Notes:

- The resolution provides Richmond's required support for Henrico County transportation funding applications that cross or affect the City boundary.
- The proposed projects involve Williamsburg Road, Chamberlayne Road, Brook Road, Nine Mile Road, and the Bryan Park interchange.
- These corridors influence Richmond gateways, regional traffic, transit service, and bicycle and pedestrian connections.
- Adoption supports Henrico's applications but does not itself appropriate City funding

Council Staff Questions:

1. What is the specific Richmond connection and expected benefit for each project?
2. Does Richmond anticipate any local match, right-of-way, utility, maintenance, or operating responsibility?
3. How will the projects coordinate with Richmond's plans for transit, bicycle and pedestrian improvements, and corridor development?
4. Are there any anticipated traffic, park-access, or neighborhood impacts associated with the Bryan Park interchange project?

6. **Resolution No. 2026-R029**

Patron Mayor Avula

Title: To request that the Chief Administrative Officer execute a Joint Gilpin Transformation Working Group Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Richmond and the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority to establish the intended roles of the parties as partners in the redevelopment of the Gilpin Court housing community, and to request that the Chief Administrative Officer enter similar memoranda of understanding with the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority for future redevelopment of other Richmond public housing communities.

Council Staff Notes:

- Slide 2: The City and RRHA propose a joint working group to implement Gilpin Court redevelopment as part of the resident-developed Jackson Ward Community Plan.
- Slide 4: A separate steering committee of residents and community stakeholders would meet monthly with City and RRHA representatives to provide ongoing input.
- Slide 5: The City would oversee overall plan implementation, while RRHA would remain responsible for the housing redevelopment. Implementation is expected to take at least ten years.
- Slide 6: The guiding principles emphasize continuous resident engagement, preservation of Black history and culture, neighborhood services, economic advancement, mixed-income housing, and homeownership opportunities.
- Slide 7: The plan commits to one-for-one replacement of all 781 deeply affordable units, with replacement units potentially located both on the current Gilpin footprint and elsewhere in the city.
- Slide 7: Additional commitments include tenant protections, case management, competitive wages, job training, and opportunities for minority-owned businesses and City residents.
- Slide 8: The framework is intended to serve as a model for future public housing redevelopment efforts.

Council Staff Questions:

1. What authority will Gilpin residents and the steering committee have beyond providing advice?
2. How will one-for-one replacement, build-first phasing, and the right to return be defined and publicly tracked?
3. How many replacement units could be located outside Gilpin, and what standards will govern their location?
4. What City funding and staffing will be required over the anticipated ten-year implementation period?
5. What reporting structure, performance measures, and independent verification could LUHT request to effectively monitor progress and evaluate whether the City and RRHA are meeting their commitments?

OTHER BUSINESS

Boards and Commissions Appointments

Council Staff Summary and Notes

- **Affordable Housing Trust Fund Supervisory Board:** Two applicants are under consideration for the service-provider seat, and one applicant is under consideration for the charitable-institution seat. No mayoral appointment has been submitted for the lender seat.
- **Board of Fire Appeals:** Three vacancies remain, with no applications received.
- **Commission of Architectural Review:** Two applicants are under consideration for the Richmond Association of Realtors nominee seat, including one reappointment.
- **Community Transportation Advisory Committee:** Two applicants are under consideration for one City-appointed vacancy.
- **Public Art Commission:** Three applicants are under consideration for one vacancy.
- **RRHA Board of Commissioners:** One reappointment is under consideration for the tenant-representative seat, and nine applicants are listed for two additional vacancies.
- **Safe and Healthy Streets Commission:** Two applicants are listed for the general qualified-voter seats, and two applicants are listed for the Community Transportation Advisory Committee representative seat.

Proposed LUHT Presentation Schedule: September 2026–February 2027

Council Staff Summary and Notes

- LUHT will **not** meet in August due to Council's summer recess. The committee will reconvene in September and begin the new presentation schedule.
- The schedule is intended to provide regular, topic-focused briefings on major land use, housing, transportation, infrastructure, and implementation issues through February 2027.
- *The Department of Economic Development's annual real estate presentation, originally scheduled for the July meeting, will instead be heard in September.*
- September will also include a presentation on senior housing and aging in place.
- Later meetings will address parking and traffic calming, Richmond 300 and SUP trends, ADU implementation, CVTA projects, stormwater and infill development, and affordable housing program implementation.