



AURORA HIGHLANDS CIVIC ASSOCIATION MARCH 2026 NEWSLETTER



BREAKING NEWS — FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Neighbors,
Land-use planning should be a topic as dry as an unbuttered cracker, but here in Arlington, there are major changes happening, and **23rd Street is in the crosshairs.**

FAITH IN HOUSING LEGISLATION

Last month the state approved a bill that will allow every church to develop affordable housing on their land, and they can copycat existing residential buildings within 500 feet. That means **if Melwood is built, this law will allow the church sites on 23rd Street to copycat and build their own 60-foot buildings.** Even if Melwood is not built, 45-foot buildings will be allowed but at a lower density of 20 units per acre (as opposed to 60 per acre at Melwood.) The legislation will be finalized next year - so there still may be time to make revisions. *See inside for more.*

NELLIE CUSTIS SCHOOL LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

To prevent 23rd Street from becoming another generic high-density 60-ft tall canyon from Grant to Joyce, it is imperative that we advocate for the preservation of Nellie Custis School via the Local Historic District. If you haven't sent in a letter please do so, and ask your neighbors as well - **as this is how our County Board makes decisions. The letters that have been sent are very compelling.** Please write to the County Board at countyboard@arlingtonva.us & cc: president@aurorahighlands.org.

Please sign the Save Nellie Custis School Change.org petition at this link ASAP:
<https://c.org/jv2YV92Px6>



SAVE THE DATE MARCH 18 - HALRB MEETING NELLIE CUSTIS SCHOOL



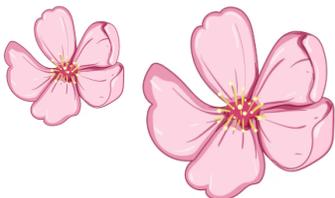
The County's Local Historic District Study is posted on the AHCA website under Documents. The Study will be reviewed at the **March 18 HALRB** meeting which is open to the public and attendance matters. **Details inside about the Study & how to attend.** We will discuss the Study at our March 11 meeting. Demo of Nellie Custis School could be imminent!

MARCH MEETING

We will also discuss the Faith In Housing legislation at the March 11 meeting, along with an update on the library's 250 anniversary event, and ideas for future meetings and social events. Looking forward to seeing you on Wednesday. Thank you,

Regards,

Stacy Meyer,
President



**PEAK BLOOM FORECASTED
March 28 - 31**

Next Meeting:

Wednesday, March 11

At: Aurora Hills Recreation Center

**735 18th St S, Arlington, VA | 7:00-9:00 pm
refreshments & social at 6:30 pm**

- 6:30 pm Social - coffee / cake**
- 7:00 pm Announcements & Queen City video (left from last month)**
- 7:10 pm Review of the Local Historic District Study for Nellie Custis School**
- 8:00pm AHCA Business**
 - Social events
 - Development updates
 - "Faith in Housing" Legislation
 - Library 250 Event
- 9:00pm Adjourn (latest)**

Optional: Register via Zoom
<https://bit.ly/2026AHCA>

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- (703) 594-1344
- P.O. Box 25201 Arlington, VA 22202
- Local Listserve: 4D-A
<https://groups.io/g/4D-A22202>

**POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT on 23rd STREET S
RESULTING FROM FAITH IN HOUSING (VIRGINIA SB388 and HB1279)**



Melwood is approved for ~60 units / acre, 105 units IN 500 ft COPYCAT RADIUS OF MELWOOD:

- Calvary owns several properties totaling ~ 67K SF, 1.6 acres > copycat potential 92 units
- Latter Day Saints buildings total ~48K SF, 1.1 acres > 66 units
- Our Lady of Lourdes (including the Arlington underground stream) totals ~140K SF, 3.2 acres > 193 units
- Mt. Vernon is in the 500 ft copycat radius of Our Lady of Lourdes. Once OLOL is built out Mt. Vernon can copycat its ~27K SF, .6 acres > 38 units

Potential exceeds 500 units!!!*

*figures from Arlington County land records - potential based on legislation.

The Feb 4 ARLNOW article on the Faith In Housing Legislation was the first most of us had heard about it, even those who pay close attention. **Yet OUR representative, Adele McClure was the Chief Co-Patron of the house bill, Patrick Hope also was a sponsor and County Board Member JD Spain testified in support.** After discussion at our February meeting, we sent a letter to the Virginia legislature and the County Board opposing the legislation (available on the website under Documents.) Many areas of Arlington near high density areas will be impacted and *there is no provision to publicly review impacts of density.* The bill has been approved but there is a one year period for a second vote in 2027. **50+ people from Aurora Highlands have signed onto a letter that was crafted by Lyon Village requesting a pause for more review of the legislation.** As of press time, the letter has over 250 signatures and the support of civic associations representing all areas of Arlington: Williamsburg, Shirlington, Aurora Highlands, Lyon Village, Lyon Park, Maywood, Leeway Overlee, Glencarlyn, Waverly Hills - with others in the works.

As we learned at the February 2025 County Board meeting on Melwood, the County is breaking its decades-old promise of keeping density on the transit corridors even though there is more than enough density approved there for all of the housing needs projected. It is not hyperbole to say there is an assault on low-density neighborhoods, that the idea of "Arlington's Urban Villages" is dead, as is the "Arlington Way" - the process that gives residents a voice in decisions.

What is left is **US BEING ACTIVE:** letters, meeting attendance, voting, lobbying and for some lawsuits (Missing Middle, River House, etc.) **You matter to your neighborhood.** You are being asked to help. Please attend our March 11 meeting, please sign the letter sent February 26, **please attend the March 18 HALRB meeting, please send a letter in support of the Local Historic District & sign the change.org petition!**

LEGISLATION IS EXPECTED TO GO TO THE GOVERNOR BY MAR 13

If you have not registered via the website and the listserve, please make sure you do so you do not miss out on important updates. Also, check to make sure you received the February 26 email, and re-register if you did not. We're not the spammers some systems think we are!!

**March 18, 2026
HALRB Meeting
Nellie Custis School
Local Historic District
DRAFT STUDY**



We received the county's DRAFT Nellie Custis Historic District Study on February 27. It is posted on the website under "Documents".

The good news: the study acknowledges that Percy Adams, a notable architect who went on to design the Longworth House Office Building and the Rixey Mansion was the designer of Nellie Custis and it was one of his first projects.

The bad news: after 20 months, the study makes the incredulous conclusion that there is not enough "historic integrity" left of the building to restore it, and makes that conclusion without even presenting a survey of the building. But, **the building is clearly in great shape in terms of restoration!** The existing brick and trim are well-preserved, as is the form of the entire building. The windows and doors were replaced **within the original masonry openings** meaning the work to put them back is minimal. The rear and the west facade 1st Floor are preserved behind the addition, which appears to have just been "tacked onto" the original construction.

Further, Nellie Custis School is a contributing building to the Aurora Highlands Historic District which was established in 2008, well after the changes had been made to the building - *if the changes had impacted the historic preservation status of the building, it would have been noted in the Historic District application, as for example, Calvary Church adjacent is not a contributing building to the historic district.*

The AHCA Board is continuing to review the Study for our March 11 meeting for discussion. We need attendance at the March 18 HALRB meeting and for you to send letter to the County Board, cc president@aurorahighlands.org. ***If the County rejects the Local Historic District, possibly as early as April, there may be no stopping the demolition of Nellie Custis School, unfortunately, and the fate will be set for this building and potentially every church site on 23rd Street with 60 foot affordable housing by-right at 60 units per acre.***

**HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN THE
MARCH 18, HALRB MEETING
MEETING @ 6:30 PM**

2100 CLARENDON BLVD RM 311

VISIT:

[https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Commissions-and-](https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Commissions-and-AdvisoryGroups/Historical-Affairs-Landmark-Review-Board)

[AdvisoryGroups/Historical-Affairs-Landmark-Review-Board](https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Commissions-and-AdvisoryGroups/Historical-Affairs-Landmark-Review-Board)

• **Sign-up to speak on-line during the public hearing by 5:00 PM on the day of the hearing - meeting will be via Teams**

• **In person speakers may register by completing a speaker slip in the meeting room before the meeting begins**

• **Submit written comments online to the Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board. Lorin Farris: lfarris@arlingtonva.us -note that you want your comment to go to HALRB** Comments received by 2:00 PM on the day of the hearing will be given to the HALRB Board

QUICK PROPS:

Carl Allen, & Nori Wilson have volunteered to organize social events this year.

Thank you to everyone that has taken the time to send in a letter regarding the Nellie Custis School Local Historic District!

AHCA is committed to inclusivity and open, civil dialogue.

Please sign the Save Nellie Custis School Change.org petition ASAP: <https://c.org/jv2YV92Px6>



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Headlines

Calendar



Local Business & Development

- Buffalo Wild Wings Closed in February after 15 years in business.
- Freddie's Beach Bar celebrated its 25th anniversary March 1.
- Washington Business Journal reports:
 - New innovation district launched in National Landing "National IQ"
 - Federal Realty requesting relief of the site plan condition requiring a drugstore at Pentagon Row/WestPost in order to replace Walgreens with a bookstore.
 - Zell is proposing an office-to-resi conversion at the former TSA site with high-profile Miami architects Arquitectonica.
 - Boeing filed a site plan to install red, white & blue LED lights around its mechanical penthouses.

Community News

- Delegate Adele McClure is scheduled to provide a legislative recap and updates on Amazon and the CC2DCA pedestrian bridge at the March 18 Crystal City CA meeting. Perhaps she'll discuss Faith in Housing?
- **HALRB Meeting March 18 - Nellie Custis Local Historic District Study**
- Arlington County is currently seeking public input through its Resident Satisfaction Survey.
- The County Manager released the proposed operating budget, with public hearings scheduled for March 24 and March 26.

Arts & Culture

- Cherry Blossom Festival! Pink in the Park returns from March 21 to April 10, featuring events at Long Bridge Park, Water Park, and Metropolitan Park.
- "Collective Voices: Women's Clubs and Local Change" will be on display March 1-30 at the Arlington Historical Museum. The closing reception for "A Different Look from a Different View" by local artist Zane Killgo will be held March 28.

Political - BREAKING NEWS

- Seen at 23rd & Eads Street: signs for 22202's own legendary businessman Billy Bayne independent run for County Board. "the revolution will not be televised" except possibly on the big screens at the Crystal City Sports Pub!

March 1-30: Historical Society Exhibit: Women's Clubs.

March 11: Joint Meeting of the Zoning Ordinance Committee and Long Range Planning Committee, including results of EV planning study, 7-9 pm.

March 11: **AHCA Meeting 7 pm, 6:30 pm social.**

March 12: APS School Board Meeting, 7 pm.

March 13: Site Plan Review committee Walking Tour at the Air & Space Force Association site, 12 pm.

March 13: St. Patrick's Day Luncheon. at Aurora Hills Community Center Fri., 12:30-2:30 p.m. Wear your green!

March 13: Honored Citizen Nominations Deadline. More info at <https://www.apsva.us/honored-citizens/>.

March 14: 9:30 AM Arlington County Board meeting

March 14: Teen Takeover at Thomas Jefferson Community Center, free event for middle and high school teens with glow sticks and open skating, 7-10 pm.

March 18: CCCA March Meeting, with delegate Adele McClure, 7 pm.

March 18: **HALRB meeting, 6:30 p.m.**

March 19: Historical Society Memorial Fundraiser to support its stumbling stone program. Reserve a spot. Lyon Park Community Center, 7-9 p.m.

March 26: APS School Board Meeting. 7 p.m.

March 27: Tea and a Movie: Brooklyn at Aurora Hills Community Center, 1 pm.



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