

Subject: Request to open & support interim placemaking at VHP3 after spring 2021
From: "Scott Miles, AHCA President" <president@aurorahighlands.org>
Date: 5/14/21, 5:37 PM
To: CountyBoard <CountyBoard@arlingtonva.us>
CC: Jane Rudolph <jrudolph@arlingtonva.us>, Mark Schwartz <mschwartz@arlingtonva.us>

Dear Chair de Ferranti and County Board members:

During the April 14th Aurora Highlands Civic Association meeting, **AHCA membership voted to approve a motion asking that recreational programming be scheduled from the Virginia Highlands Park softball Field #3 (Hearts Field) to other county fields, starting after the spring 2021 season**, to allow unrestricted community use and further interim placemaking investments in the park supported by stakeholder entities until a master plan is complete.

We greatly appreciate the County's willingness to provide greater community use of Field #3 (The Hearts Field) over the past months, especially during the Cherry Blossom Festival. Staff has been very helpful and a great partner to work with over that time. That arrangement, however, has been curtailed to provide access Fri-Mon, and we are currently dealing with an untenable "field share" scenario.

Making a field an inviting space for community use is hard enough; continually re-placemaking every week is a Sisyphean task. Joint use with softball leagues makes coordination by volunteers onerous and also results in conflicts over fields not being cleared in time for games and leaves families and parkgoers needing to vacate with nowhere to go just as they are trying to use the space to exercise, play or just relax. Virginia Highlands Park is a public park, but yet almost all of it is prioritized for reserved and paid athletic uses. We believe this situation could be solved if Arlington treated softball the way it treats other sports, and the way other DMV jurisdictions program softball-- by scheduling games on all 7 days of the week.

This issue is extensive and will worsen -- the master planning process for Virginia Highlands Park is unfunded and years away. Meanwhile, Met Park is under construction and thousands more housing units in 22202 are under construction or in the pipeline. The lack of reliable community accessible open space is causing consternation and problems in the Pentagon City Planning Study, with uncertainty about how Virginia Highlands Park will meet our needs now and in the future flowing into uncertainty about what other public space needs will be required to accommodate future growth.

I know you have heard much of this before from individuals and the Association, and we understand your time is valuable. But this is a real and growing problem that is affecting the daily lives of residents of all ages, overburdening volunteers, impacting major planning processes, and creating unnecessary inequity in access to open space for a heavily populated part of the county. But we think that this is also a real opportunity to improve the livability for thousands of residents in 22202 and beyond.

We need your assistance in moving forward by dedicating Field #3 as daily community accessible park space and supporting an outreach process that allows for small interim improvements. This direction from the Board is essential for civic associations and other area stakeholders like the National Landing BID to invest the time and resources needed to create the space long demanded by residents.

Thank you,
Scott Miles

Scott Miles

President

Aurora Highlands Civic Association

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