



## AURORA HIGHLANDS CIVIC ASSOCIATION

July 17, 2021

Dear Chair de Ferranti and Board Members,

The majority of members present at the July 14, 2021 Aurora Highlands Civic Association approved a motion that **the Aurora Highlands Civic Association send, within the next 2 business days, by the usual method used to transmit signed letters on association letterhead by electronic email, the letter to the Arlington County Board that is linked now in the chat titled "AHCA Shared Use Letter to Arlington County Board July 14 2021"; and that this letter represent the official and exclusive position of our association on the issue of the ball fields at Virginia Highlands and supercede any previous letters or communication to the County Board or others.** The following is the exact text of the submitted letter.

The Aurora Highlands Civic Association (AHCA) has previously written to you to express opinions about the softball fields at Virginia Highlands Park.

Until a few years ago the softball fields were heavily used by softball players for evening games but the fields were otherwise locked 24 hours per day. This struck many of us as an inefficient use of a wonderful green space that could likely be used many hours per day as open space without materially impacting the softball players and their families, who come to watch them play.

Seeking to maximize happiness for our community, we advocated for, and you adopted, a “shared use” approach through which the fields would be open to the general public when softball games were not being played.

We are writing now to let you know that this approach is working well. Maintaining the fields for softball games while leaving them open for the rest of the time is ensuring that softball continues to thrive and bring joy to so many, while also allowing many people to use the open space at other times to lounge around, play tag, throw frisbees, sunbathe, and play music.

Interestingly, before writing this letter we sought feedback from our community, and found that although there are many here who agree with the “shared use” approach, there are also plenty of people who would like to push us to either extreme when it comes to the softball fields.

First, some softball players are unhappy that people occasionally drive on the fields and cause ruts in the ground. Others are annoyed that some people occasionally leave plastic chairs on the field. And yet others have been understandably unhappy to find dog poop in the outfield while sliding to catch a sinking line drive.

These folks would like to see the county reinstall the fences and lock the fields up 24x7 when softball games are not scheduled.

On the other end, some “open space” advocates and real estate agents would prefer that the softball fields be destroyed entirely. They would like to see the space turned into an open meadow in a way that would put an end to decades of softball being played (and watched) by so many in our neighborhood and beyond.

After substantial discussion here, our association believes that the “shared use” model represents the best way forward, and can be managed successfully to mitigate various concerns.

We have heard from numerous Arlingtonians that the softball fields at Virginia Highlands are a tremendously important asset to our community. They are beloved by many families who use them to play and watch team sports. Notably, these are the only softball fields within walkable distance of our neighborhood. It is a common sight to see kids who have walked to watch their parents play softball -- something that would be impossible if the parents were forced to drive to a different part of the county to play. Plenty of players walk or bike to their softball games as well, and absolutely love being able to play games right in their own neighborhood.

Also, we have learned that it is fairly common for teams to go out after games to the bars and restaurants in our neighborhood. We like this support of our local businesses.

It is our hope that with increased signage and awareness we can reduce the instances of dogs pooping on the fields. Especially now that there is a mini dog park behind the fields.

As Arlington becomes increasingly dense and more people move into our neighborhood our parks are more important than ever. The soccer, tennis, basketball, and softball fields are all extremely popular, as are the sprayground, playgrounds, and the open spaces. We appreciate the County Board continuing to prioritize both sports and open spaces that are in high demand. We also urge the County to proceed with a Master Plan for the park as soon as possible.



Scott Miles  
President  
Aurora Highlands Civic Association