



APRIL 2023 NEWSLETTER

NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Neighbors,

This is my first Arlington Spring in 10 years, and it has been glorious! Nick and I missed the cherry blossoms, tulips, and rebuds, and wow, they did not disappoint! If you're doing some planting or container gardening this spring, try to use native plants for their ability to support pollinators. The [Northern Alexandria Native Plant Sale](#) is coming up on April 29, so take advantage of those experts for your plant selection. See the back page for advice on spring tree care.

Join us on Wednesday, April 12 for our regular AHCA monthly meeting, virtual via Zoom. [Register in advance](#) to receive the link. On the agenda we have Erik Grabowsky, Arlington's Chief of the Solid Waste Bureau. In honor of Earth Day, we have invited him to give a presentation on the Arlington recycling program, highlighting the fact that we have one of the leading recycling programs in the country. He will show us how the items from our green and blue bins get sorted and processed, and how the material is reused.

We've also invited neighbor Les Garrison, to present the volunteer opportunities with the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). A new training cycle begins on April 12, so see the article here on page one for details.

Cory Giacobbe, President, AHCA

Calendar

See aurorahighlands.org/events/

- April - [National Cherry Blossom Festival](#) continues through April 16
- April - [Exhibition: "Arlington Volunteers"](#) At Central Library through April 30
- April 7-Opening reception: [Kate Trygstad: Waters of Life](#) Solo Show, through 4/28 at the Gallery Underground, 2100 Crystal Drive
- April 8-[Comedy Karaoke Trivia Funtime Show](#), Highline RXR, 2010 Crystal Dr, 7:30 pm
- April 12 - April AHCA Meeting, 7 pm, [online via Zoom](#)
- April 10, 17, 24 - [Virtual Open Door Mondays](#) with County Board members 7-9 pm
- April 14- 55+ [Acoustic Hour](#) at Aurora Hills 1:00-2:30 pm
- April 17- 55+ [Documentary Discussions](#) at Aurora Hills Library 1:30 pm
- April 22- [Teen Summer Job Fair](#), TJ Community Center, 10 am to 1 pm (ages 14-18)
- April 22 - Fort Scott Invasive Plant Removal, 10 a.m. to noon. Register [here](#)
- April 28 - 55+ [Movies at Aurora Hills](#) 12:30-2:30 pm
- April 28-29 - [National Garage Racing Championships](#), 2011 Crystal Drive
- May 1 - 55+ [Jeopardy! at Aurora Hills](#) 2:00-3:00 pm
- May 6 - Haley Park Invasive Plant Removal, 9-11 a.m. Register [here](#)

CERT - Emergency Response Training starts April 12

Would you like to increase your personal, family, and community preparedness for disaster and emergency situations? The Arlington Community Emergency Response Team (ArlCERT) is an organization of volunteers who receive over 24 hours of training in myriad subjects regarding preparedness and emergencies. The spring training class starts April 12 and runs for 4 Wednesdays and 4 Saturdays (about 3 hours per class, longer on weekends). For more information about the Arlington CERT and to request sign up information and schedules go to <http://arlingtoncert.com/>. (This URL will redirect you to the County website, where the info resides.)

Amazon Puts Hold on HQ2 Expansion to Pen Place

On March 3, several business news outlets reported that Amazon was delaying the development of their second part of HQ2 in [PenPlace](#) (approved by the County in 2022). AHCA had a quick update from Amazon at its March 8 meeting (meeting recording link [here](#)). ARLNow story is [here](#); Dcist story is [here](#). Meanwhile, plans to complete the Amazon buildings in [MetPark](#) are on track and the public park and Amazon buildings are due to open this summer, with the farmers' market returning, and employees moving in this year. According to many sources, Amazon is not abandoning its plans for PenPlace, just putting them on hold for a year or so. Stay tuned for additional details.

AHCA Membership Dues for Calendar Year 2023

\$20 per household. Pay dues either by mailing a check to AHCA, P.O. Box 25201, Arlington, VA 22202, or go to www.aurorahighlands.org and click the "Donate" button to pay by PayPal.

** Paying by check saves the AHCA the PayPal transaction fee.

Next Meeting:

Wednesday, April 12

7pm-9 pm, [Virtual via Zoom](#) ([Register Here](#))

<https://bit.ly/April2023AHCA>

AGENDA

- 7:00 pm** - Call to order and approve [March minutes](#)
- 7:10 pm** - Presentation: Arlington Recycling Program by Erik Grabowski, Chief, County Solid Waste Bureau
- 7:40 pm** - Presentation - CERT emergency response team by Les Garrison, Arlington CERT Coordinator
- 7:50 pm** - County requests for Comment
- 8:00 pm** - SPRC report - Crystal Tower 3
- 8:20 pm** - Committee Reports
- 8:40 pm** - Other Business
 - New Business/Announcements
- 9:00 pm** - Adjourn

Newsletters & Social Media

We hear from neighbors that they really enjoy having a print newsletter. We'll do our best to continue it, that will depend on continued support from advertisers and volunteers to distribute it. Sign up for newsletters by email at aurorahighlands.org/join-ahca and follow us at @AuroraHighlands on Twitter, Facebook, or Insta to stay connected no matter what.

The 4D-A group list-serve is an alternative to Nextdoor for hyper-local information and to post queries to your neighbors: To subscribe, go to the group website, read the rules and scroll down to the membership button. Here is the website: <https://groups.io/g/4D-A22202>

All Underlined Items are Links to Websites and Other Content - Go to our Website for Live Links! [AuroraHighlands.org](https://aurorahighlands.org)

We use many links in the AHCA Newsletter to easily lead you to websites where you can get more information and stay up to date on the issues that interest you. Any underlined text is a hyperlink to a site. To save space in the print version, we haven't printed the long URLs, but it lets you know that you can go to the AHCA website for a clickable version of the [AHCA Newsletter](#). See what I just did there? ;)

Read Up & Reach Out!



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Neighborhood News

Arlington County Tree Canopy Study Update – We Need More Trees in Aurora Highlands!

The County [Civic Federation](#) sponsored a public workshop on the Arlington County Tree Canopy Study on Saturday, March 25, in the Lubber Run Community Center. Karen Firehook, Executive Director of GIC ([Green Infrastructure Center, Inc.](#)), presented and led the discussion afterwards. Her [slides are here](#). Among the key findings so far, the overall tree canopy coverage in the County is much less than the County has stated (41%), in part because this new study uses more accurate techniques, including LIDAR, to capture tree coverage data (33% for County overall). The GIC study data show that AHCA has only 22% tree coverage and has room for 3,030 additional trees ([see this map, which excludes the parks](#)). Other maps of interest include [heat islands](#), [street tree coverage](#), and [park trees](#). GIC also offers excellent guides and resources on how to choose, plant, and keep trees healthy (see resources linked through slides). GIF data and resources can help homeowners select trees for their property – and provide guidance to developers, County staff, and citizen activists.

55+ Activities - Upcoming [Summer Registration](#) for 55+ programs, events and classes: Wednesday, May 24 at 10 am!

The Spring Activity Guide is [here](#). [View activities and register!](#) There are great programs for fitness, art, music, dance, trips, hikes, parties and more!

Upcoming activities for seniors at Aurora Hills Center include [Chinese Brush Painting: Orchids](#) on April 12, [Acoustic Hour](#) on April 14, [Documentary Discussions: The White Helmets](#) on April 17, [Magazine Article Discussion Group](#) on April 19, [Chinese Brush Painting: Bamboo](#) on April 19, [Movies at Aurora Hills "See How They Run"](#) on April 28, See the full list of 55+ events [here](#). 55+ Pass holders only. Don't have a 55+ Pass? Learn how to get a pass [here](#).

Construction Fatigue Continuing – Please be careful around construction sites

Private developers, the County, and other organizations (VDOT, Arlington National Cemetery, Dominion Energy) all have major construction projects in our area that are causing major construction fatigue and headaches for local residents. Use the [Crystal City-Pentagon City Area Map](#) to identify the project and relevant staff to contact to report problems directly. Also use the County's [Report a Problem](#) site or the [My Arlington Mobile](#) app to report construction problems. Select Blocked Sidewalk, Street, or Bike Lane" after noting the location of the problem. Note – you can also report misparked e-scooters and bikes by selecting misparked rental scooter/bike! Note that residents can often subscribe to construction updates for major projects, such as MetPark and 1900 Crystal Drive. The National Landing BID also has a [transportation and construction alert page](#).

Arlington County Civic Federation Update

By a 70% majority vote, the CivFed passed a resolution documenting steps needed to restore public faith in Arlington County governance. The resolution ([final version here](#)) stems from a [100-page report](#) with over 700 footnoted documented examples of residents' experiences. CivFed awaits a response from the County Board. See [online version of the April newsletter](#) for more details, at [AuroraHighlands.org](#).

County News

Engage Arlington: Visit [this site](#) frequently for new opportunities to give the County feedback!

Missing Middle Housing – Now what?

On March 22, the Board adopted a series of Zoning Ordinance and General Land Use Plan amendments related to the [Missing Middle Housing Study](#). These amendments will allow for Expanded Housing Options (EHO) development for up to 6 units per residential lot—if certain conditions are met, including the same building height, setbacks, and size as allowed for single-detached homes. The adoption also caps **annual** permits at **58**, distributed around the County. The changes will take effect July 1, 2023. Read the County [news release](#) for key details, including lot size, tree canopy, lot coverage, design, and parking. Guidelines for accessory dwellings are impacted as well. Of the 58 potential Expanded Housing Sites (EHO), 30 permits are for R-6 zoned sites and 7 are for R-5 sites. Most of Aurora Highlands is zoned R-5 or R-6 (see [interactive zoning map](#)),

Democratic Primary is Tuesday, June 20th - Please vote!

Voters in Arlington County will be selecting Democratic candidates for the following offices in the Democratic primary on June 20: Two Open Positions on the County Board; one position for each of these offices: County Sheriff, Commonwealth Attorney, and State Senate (40th District) and Virginia House of Delegates (2nd District) - Aurora Highlands voters are not in either District, so will not see these legislative positions on our ballots.

Who will be on the ballot? As of today, all candidates' applications are still in process. County election staff will update the [voting website](#) as candidates are approved. Approved candidates' names will appear on the final ballot.

All eligible Arlington voters may vote in the Democratic Primary: Virginia voters do not register by political party and may vote in any single party primary. In a dual primary, the voter may select only one party ballot.

County Board candidate selection: This Democratic Primary is a rare opportunity to select two Board candidates, as both current Board members, Christian Dorsey and Katie Cristol, are not running. The County will be using [Ranked Choice Voting](#) to select the two Democratic candidates. In ranked choice voting, the voter ranks their choices in preferred order, which allows the second choices for people to be added into totals when their preferred candidate has the fewest votes. The votes are redistributed until two candidates achieve a majority. Please pay attention to how ranked voting works and **evaluate all candidates carefully before voting**. Watch for opportunities to hear candidates speak and question them on their proposed policies.

Early voting in person will start **May 5** (Bozman Center).

Early voting by mail: Request your ballot through [this link](#); return your ballot by mail, to the election drop box by the Aurora Hills library, or to the election office. Last day to [apply for a mail ballot](#): **5 pm on June 9**. Note, you can drop off your completed mail ballot at your polling place – or in the drop box – on Election Day, until 7PM.

Voter Registration: The last day to [register to vote or update existing registration](#) is **May 30**. Please verify your voter registration information before voting and update your record as needed. Note that your polling place, voting record, and Districts are all part of this record.

Same day voting registration: Arlington implemented recently-approved same day voting registration during the November 2022 election. Go to your polling place where you will complete a voter registration application, a provisional ballot form, and a ballot. Please bring an acceptable ID with you if possible. Read more about same day voting registration [here](#).

Everything you need to know to vote in the Democratic Primary can be found through this [County voting page](#).

P.L.A.C.E. Grant – Applications due April 28

[Arlington County P.L.A.C.E. Grant](#) (Promoting Local Arts and Community Equity Grant) is a competitive grant program that will support community-initiated projects related to Arlington's history, built environment and/or cultural heritage. The grant reinforces the goals of the Arts Commission to advance cultural equity in Arlington for all and enhances Arlington County's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. Read the full article in the [online version of the February newsletter](#) at [AuroraHighlands.org](#)

Commercial Development

Americana – SPRCs Complete

Staff held the second – and final – SPRC meeting for the Americana project on February 13. After review by the Transportation Commission (March 30) and Planning Commission, it will go before the County Board for final approval.

Crystal Towers 3 SPRC 2 – April 3

The second SPRC hybrid meeting for Crystal Towers 3 was held on April 3. Topics included transportation, sustainable design, community benefits, and updates since SPRC 1. See [staff report](#) and [draft staff slides](#) for project updates and other important information. The meeting recording, presentations, and slides will be posted after the meeting.

SPRC discussion focused on unresolved transportation and open space issues. Parking, PUDO, and the pocket park remain concerns, though SPRC members supported the addition of solar on a roof and encouraged Dweck to add even more.

Pedestrian passage: The developer presented a revised plan for the pedestrian passage that connects Eads to the driveway leading to 18th. The plan requires removing 4 more trees and building a new retaining wall that separates the large (96 seat) cafe zone from the pedestrian path. The wall allows the cafe zone to remain level with Eads while the pedestrian passage slopes up (4% grade) to meet the ground level further west.

Mid-block crosswalk on Eads: J. Gabor, the County transportation staff for this project, noted that they did evaluate adding this crosswalk, but rejected it as too risky because of conflicts with the hotel and project site traffic. SPRC members continued to push for a new safe mid-block crosswalk on Eads to support the large number of pedestrians that cross here, at great risk, and the increasing number who will cross here as new residents arrive and if Route 1 is lowered to grade. SPRC members pushed staff to reevaluate their decision.

Open space: The developer explained the challenges to expanding the open space at the NE corner of the site: Some of the land is owned by Lofts 590, so Dweck was only able to add about 1000'. Preserving a large tree on the site requires protecting it. Dweck proposed a boardwalk, while the SPRC encouraged more greenery instead. In general, SPRC members encouraged the developer to add more native greenery of all kinds throughout the site and create additional publicly accessible pedestrian passages/sidewalks across the megablock.

Community benefits: Most SPRC members did not see the draft staff slides before the meeting. The community benefits listed were the usual basic ones – affordable housing, Green Building Incentive/LEED Gold, some transportation and open space benefits. Meanwhile the residents and community will be losing many mature trees and will suffer through two years of construction. Community members of the SPRC strongly pushed for better community engagement for community benefits and including the recommendations from the [Livability 22202 guidance](#).

Many issues still feel unresolved after this final SPRC meeting. Please continue to follow this project's evaluation as it moves through the Transportation Commission, Planning Commission, and County Board discussions.

RiverHouse Neighborhood

JBGS submitted 4.1 plans for this large and complex project with multiple new buildings and amenities spread across the 30 acre megablock. On March 2nd, JBGS staff held a [public open house](#) to update the community on their plans and get feedback. Over 100 local residents attended to listen to the update, share their views, and eat excellent complimentary pizza (from We the Pizza). JBGS staff were pleased with the turnout and comments from the 17th public engagement so far (and more will come). Among the comments were: continuing concerns about building heights, blocked views from the Ridge, parking overflow to Aurora Highlands and Ridge neighborhoods, proposed townhouse architecture is too modern/doesn't fit in neighborhood, open space – remove invasive species and unhealthy plants and replace with healthy, thriving native species; needs to be usable (active), green, accessible, and visible; good mix of housing types (senior living and condos were appreciated); retail needs to meet community needs (i.e. hardware store).

Transportation

Performance Parking Pilot – Includes National Landing

This pilot parking project includes about 4,500 metered parking spaces. The spaces are in two County Planning corridors: Rosslyn-Ballston and **Richmond Highway**. Most of the spaces included in the pilot will be on-street parking. An [online public engagement](#) was held on February 23rd; an [online survey](#) will be open through this summer. On April 3, County staff began installing the equipment – sensors and recording transmitters – needed for the project.

VDOT Route 1 Multimodal Improvements Phase 2 update – PIM 4 in mid-May or June?

The VDOT Route 1 Multimodal Improvements Planning Study Phase 2 is still behind schedule. Watch for the fourth – and final – Public Information Meeting in mid-June.

Transit – County survey on hold; Yellow line still closed until May 7

Staff have postponed the Arlington [Transit Strategic Plan](#) online public engagement, initially scheduled for March 23rd, to mid-late Spring. Read about the transit strategic plan here and support our local transit options.

Meanwhile, the Metro Yellow line remains closed until May 7, with the Blue line providing services to Yellow line stations in Virginia. See the [National Landing BID page](#) for alternative access options in Crystal City.

Long Bridge Project Moving Along

Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPR) is now responsible for the massive Long Bridge Project which will double the available RR tracks from 2 to 4 going over the Potomac and add a separate new bike-ped bridge that connects the northern end of Long Bridge Park, the Mt Vernon Trail and Ohio Drive in DC. Bike-ped advocates were invited to participate in a [bike-ped bridge stakeholders meeting](#) with VPR staff on February 12 (see March AHCA newsletter).

For more information on this project, read the full article at our website [AuroraHighlands.org](#)

Feedback opportunity: Send your [online survey](#) comments by **April 10**. [SUSMO \(Sustainable Mobility for Arlington\)](#) has suggestions for comments.

Crystal City-Pentagon City Open House

Arlington County and the National Landing BID hosted an open house on March 27 to answer questions about the 30-odd transportation, parks, and private developments happening in the Crystal City - Pentagon City neighborhoods. They also highlighted a new interactive map that allows you to get current information about the status of each project:

[Crystal City-Pentagon City Area Map](#)

For full article please see our website, [AuroraHighlands.org](#)

National Landing BID Transportation Roundtable

On March 22nd, the National Landing BID hosted their quarterly virtual Transportation Roundtable, which features a County transportation staff extensive review of County transportation projects in National Landing. This ongoing update is the easiest way to stay informed on the myriad transportation projects in our area. A recording of the roundtable is [here](#).

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Free ART Bus Rides for APS Students:

Middle and high school students from Arlington Public Schools ride free anytime on Arlington Transit (ART), the County's bus transit system, with an iRide SmarTrip card, <https://bit.ly/3B3q84L>

Walk & Drive at the same time! Volunteer as an Oakridge ES Walking School Bus "Driver"!

Yes, you too can "drive" - lead a Walking School Bus by walking with a small group of kids to Oakridge Elementary one morning a week as part of this popular one-year-old pilot program. (For background: <https://www.walkarlington.com/get-on-board-the-walking-school-bus/>)

You'll get your steps in, the kids will learn to safely get from here to there w/out relying on Mom, Dad or the family car—plus Oakridge will have fewer cars clogging the neighborhood! The cost? About one hour of your time one day a week. (Your vacation schedules and other commitments will be accommodated.) We've got the (adorable) student "passengers" but we need more neighbors to be "drivers"! Please give me a call/text at 703-725-1387 for further information or go to <https://friendsofthealliance.org/walking-school-bus/> and click on the volunteer link.

Thank you,

Andrea Walker, Your neighbor on Ridge Rd

2023 AHCA officers

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Spring Tree Care

It's spring, and that means trees are starting to grow. Here are a few tips for healthy trees.

1. Mulching: If you're putting mulch around trees, keep it away from the bark. You want more of a donut effect and not a volcano. Mulch will trap moisture against the trunk, causing the bark to decay and letting disease organisms invade the tree.

2. Pruning: Avoid pruning trees in the spring. They are more susceptible to damage from pests and disease when they are actively growing. It's OK to remove dead branches. If you have to prune, do it carefully: look for the "collar" at the junction of the branch and the trunk. Cut the branch just outside the collar, and avoid leaving a stub. This way the tissue will grow out from the collar and seal off the cut.

3. Watering: If you planted a tree in the last two years, you should make sure to water it well through the growing season. Each week, unless it rains 1.5 inches—which means we get a good soaking rain for much of the day, not a drizzle or a short downpour—it needs about 20 gallons of water. The simplest way is to use a watering bag and fill it every week.

4. Sit back and enjoy how the tree changes through the seasons.

For more information on tree care, visit the website of Tree Stewards of Arlington and Alexandria at <https://treestewards.org/tree-care/>

Skate Night at TJ! Final 2 events: April 15 and April 22

A super fun community activity! Enjoy a family-friendly skating session select Saturdays, 6-9 pm, through spring 2023. On-site café will have snacks and drinks available for purchase. All ages.

Registration opens three weeks before event date

Thomas Jefferson Community Center, 3501 2nd St S

Teens Making a Difference (TMAD) – Youth Community Groups Volunteer Opportunity

Want to make a difference? TMAD (Teens Making a Difference) is a Service Club that helps students ages 12-18 plan service projects, learn leadership skills, and improve their schools and community. The program offers participants a chance to earn a stipend for work related learning programs. If interested in TMAD, apply through [this application](#) (no deadline). Visit [this page](#) for more information on the program.

The National Cherry Blossom Festival continues through April 16. Check out [their website](#) for events, including the [Petalpalooza](#) festival and fireworks display at Capitol Riverfront this Saturday, April 8 from 1-9 pm.

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