



# AURORA HIGHLANDS CIVIC ASSOCIATION

## APRIL NEWSLETTER

### CHERRY BLOSSOM ACTIVITIES ENDING



Photo credit: Laura Rush



Thank you to the amazing volunteers in Aurora Highlands for a fun-filled 3 weeks at the park and throughout the neighborhood, and to the spirited community for the many decorated homes and balconies! Come out and enjoy the last celebration weekend (April 10th & 11th) at Virginia Highlands Park and view the large field flowers from Peijisan Art, a huge coloring wall, games, and music; Friday (Bella and Waylon) and Sunday (The Loop), 6-7:30pm. The Festival's Petal Porch Parade of decorated cars will make its way through our neighborhood Saturday afternoon, April 10th. We'll post the route on social media as soon as we know it.

Thank you also to the National Landing BID for their coloring wall and pink social distancing circles, Arlington County Department of Parks and Recreation for their virtual and in-person activities, and the National Cherry Blossom Festival for allowing us to help celebrate this year. A big thanks as well to Amazon for its support of the Festival and the community that allowed us to put on events and pay local photographers,

artists, and musicians. It was a great collaboration. Check out what's next at the park including movie nights, zumba and music in the next pages of the newsletter.

We even made the news! Fox5 News visited the park showcasing the art and festivities. [bit.ly/fox5-vhp](http://bit.ly/fox5-vhp)



### Next Meeting: Wednesday, April 14

7-9pm, Virtual -- Zoom / Facebook  
<https://aurorahighlands.org/event/apr2021>

#### Parisa Dehghani-Tafti

Commonwealth Attorney Parisa Dehghani-Tafti will discuss crime and carjacking data, the response by her office, and take questions from the community.

#### PenPlace/Amazon HQ2

We'll have a short community presentation about what's in store for the Amazon HQ2 site, formally known as PenPlace, as well as how the first community kick-off meeting held on March 25 went, and then field your questions and comments.

#### Discussion of Open Space at Virginia Highlands

Hear about efforts to expand community use & AHCA's approach moving forward.

#### General Updates, Q&A

Review use permits, status various planning processes, and raise any additional topics for community discussion.

#### Yes, we could still use more volunteers!

You'll read several opportunities in this newsletter. There's also a need for future officers, a newsletter editor, maintaining the web site, and more. Email [info@aurorahighlands.org](mailto:info@aurorahighlands.org) with your interests.

### Read Up & Reach Out!



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## Petal Porches

Check out the festively decorated porches. Share yours with #PetalPorchParade and view the map of registered homes at [nationalcherryblossomfestival.org/event/porch-parade/](http://nationalcherryblossomfestival.org/event/porch-parade/)

There are so many around the neighborhood; here are just a few. The Washington Post even featured one in our neighborhood; the Pink Pooch Porch at 835 21st St.

<http://bit.ly/wapo-petal-porch>

Kickoff  
Celebrate the cherry blossoms by joining the Petal Porch Parade  
Area families can decorate their homes to be part of this year's festival.



## Melwood Town Hall Recap

Melwood, the non-profit on S. 23rd St. that provides opportunities for people with disabilities, held a public town hall March 30 on the future of their facility. This informative but sparsely attended public outreach event reviewed their history and current programs, followed by an interactive planning exercise with participants and a quick survey of support for the ideas on the following topics: open space, childcare, public art, community & social engagement, and affordable housing for those with disabilities. Participants shared many suggestions and resources and supported most of the topics, with the most concerns about affordable housing on site. Melwood promised to continue to serve as a polling place for Aurora Hills (Precinct 3). Watch for further engagement opportunities!

## Dominion Energy Substation Improvement & Expansion

Construction at the 18th & S. Fern site will begin this month. Watch the March 17 public meeting <https://youtu.be/GcD2dDAzCnM> for details, including the artist's proposed plan and expected sidewalk and lane closures. Project webpage is at [dominionenergy.com/crystal](http://dominionenergy.com/crystal)

## Lots of Change on the Other Side of Richmond Hwy

Construction has begun for the two new residential towers at 1900 Crystal (<http://bit.ly/1900-crystal>). Keep abreast of sidewalk and lane closures at <http://bit.ly/1900-crystal-3-21>. Planning meetings continue for the residential towers project at 2001 S Clark St; see <http://bit.ly/2001-s-clark>.

## PenPlace (Amazon HQ2) KickOff Meeting

The public PenPlace Community Kickoff was held on March 25. After hearing presentations by County, Amazon, and development representatives, participants attended breakout rooms on transportation, open space, architecture/design, and land use/planning. You can find slide decks and recordings from the Kickoff, and sign up for updates, at [projects.arlingtonva.us/projects/pen-place-2021/](http://projects.arlingtonva.us/projects/pen-place-2021/).

Two Long Range Planning Committee meetings will be held (7 pm on April 19 and May 17) to review the whole megablock, at which members of the Planning Commission will make recommendations on land use and urban design, and conformity with Arlington's existing plans. After that, Site Plan Review meetings, which get into more specific aspects of each building, will be held. All are open to the public to observe; check the link above for meeting specifics. A Park Master Plan process will run concurrently. In addition to public space, Amazon has committed to including a childcare center and community space in the buildings. The project will be heard by the Planning and the Transportation Commissions before going to the County Board.

## Pentagon City Planning Study Update

The Planning Study held its 4th public workshop March 22, focusing on land-use scenarios and the economics of redevelopment. Underutilized sites have the lowest redevelopment costs, improved and obsolete ones have mid-range costs, and improved and functional ones have the highest costs. Read through the presentation, study prior documents, sign up for updates at [bit.ly/pcps-docs](http://bit.ly/pcps-docs).

AHCA representatives on the PDSP focus group that meets regularly have been pushing the study to provide more specifics how new community amenities, like green space and schools, will be tied to future development and density.

## Harris Teeter Update

Our collective response to the possible loss of Harris Teeter resulted in a win for the community. Federal Realty, the landowner at Pentagon Row/Westpost, has opted to keep Condition #52, which requires a "full-service grocery store," as approved in 1998. They are still seeking changes to other conditions that restrict other use types, locations, and sizes of retail spaces in the development, which AHCA supports.

## New Restaurants opening at Pentagon Row/Westpost.

This month look for the opening of local chef Tim Ma's Lucky Danger, serving "food that immigrants from China brought over and essentially updated for the American palate." Also this spring, local chef Cathal Armstrong will be opening a new farm-to-table Irish pub, replacing its predecessor Siné. We'll also see work on Banditos, a "TACO temple inspired by the mouthwatering flavors of Mexican street food."



### Virginia Highlands Park, Good News / Bad News

The good news is that the success of all our work at the park has shown that having open access to green space, activities, and music is something that the community really loves and should continue. The County is allowing us to continue using the park for open access and community activities including live music on the weekends! The BID will be hosting Friday movie nights at the park in May. And in June and July, we'll have live music every Saturday. Follow our social media for updates on these activities: @aurorahighlands

Even with access to the Hearts field for the weekends, our 22202 reality is that we have a large, and growing population with no dedicated open space at one of our largest and centrally located parks, Virginia Highlands Park. Many community members, AHCA, and Livability22202 have expressed to the County a need for increasing open space. The use of the north softball field at Virginia Highlands Park for community activities has shown an overwhelming need for on-going daily access to park space, which aligns with County policies on public space uses and equity. But the current situation of sharing a field, with limited access, as our only community open space at Virginia Highlands Park is proving to be insufficient and unsustainable, for many reasons:

- Our area is one of the most underserved in the county for access to open park space per capita. Not enough space is being added, and the population is growing. To make matters worse, current spaces like MetPark will be under construction starting this year.
- Temporary fixtures that are moveable are also not durable. Replacing these fixtures and tidying up the park on a daily basis is unsustainable to maintain. More durable (less moveable fixtures) are necessary to maintain placemaking for community needs and uses.
- Community access to the field as open space is very restrictive; leashed dogs are prohibited at all times and access is limited primarily to weekends during the most needed and useable times of the year.
- Ball games pose safety and equity issues, with small groups or even one solo person practicing effectively excluding thousands of people surrounding the park from using the space without being at risk for injury.
- There is minimal interest in investment/beautification because its availability is limited to weekends or the coldest or hottest times of the year, and then it must be fully converted back to a field every couple of months.
- The demand for accessible open space is placing unreasonable expectations on development projects and planning processes in our area, and taking focus away from other important issues like housing and schools.

AHCA has asked the County for years to repurpose at least one of the softball fields, which are some of the most underutilized park facilities in Arlington, yet they occupy more than a quarter of the park's unbuilt green space, and reallocate those games to the other available County fields. Recently, we have asked the County to take tangible steps to better prioritize the needs of the thousands of community members that rely on Virginia Highlands Park as their back yard. A potential first step could be more durable, but still temporary, facilities to make the space more usable during the summer and beyond, as in this concept image.



We will continue to engage with the County on this issue, and will ask for your support, because your neighbors supporting the current arrangement need a well-deserved break.

**Movies in the Park, Coming Soon:** Who's ready for an adventure? While we still may not be able to travel to far away places, adventures can be found right in our backyard (or park) with Movies in the Park! Put on by the National Landing BID, Fridays in May at 8pm. Details and registration instructions at [nationallanding.org/do/movies-in-the-park](https://nationallanding.org/do/movies-in-the-park).

**Zumba:** Classes will continue at the park during spring and likely summer every Monday 6.30pm and Saturday 10.30am.

**Live music:** Saturdays 6:30-8pm starting on June 5th and through July. It's possible the music will extend to August or even September. Keep posted!

**Keep it Neat!** With the Cherry Blossom Festival coming to a close, what's in store for the ballfield space? Softball games are being scheduled beginning April 13th, but it's unclear whether we will be able to keep providing games for folks to use when the field's not in play. Please put the games away after you use them. Or if you have a moment as you're walking by, can you help tidy them up? This is 100% volunteer effort, and unless we can get the games picked up and off the field, we'll have to remove them completely.

# Mark Your Calendar

For details, see related articles and <https://aurorahighlands.org/events/>

## Open Door Mondays

**Every Monday, 7-8:30pm**

Talk directly to a County Board member on any topic. <http://bit.ly/opendoor-monday>

## Crystal City Farmers Market & Compost Collection

**Tuesdays, 3-7 pm**

The farmers market is back, at the Courtyard Green at 2121 Crystal Drive, with an expanded selection of vendors offering fruits and vegetables, meats, poultry, eggs, baked goods, salsas, and prepared foods. Now you can also bring your compost -- from food scraps and yard waste to paper and natural textiles -- to the community compost collection at the FreshFarm tent. Check what is / isn't compostable at [bit.ly/compostable-list](http://bit.ly/compostable-list)

## 2001 S Clark - Planning Commission Monday, April 12

The County will hold a combined LRPC/SPRC meeting for the proposed two residential tower projects at 2001 S. Clark. If approved, construction will close significant

sections of The Underground for about 3.5 years, but it will reopen, in a different arrangement, when construction is complete. Learn more about the project through its project page: <http://bit.ly/2001-s-clark>

## Comments on Neighborhood Environmental Survey (NES) on Airport Noise

**Through Wednesday, April 14**

The FAA has recently released the results of the nationwide survey regarding annoyance related to aircraft noise. Review the survey results and provide comments online <http://bit.ly/faa-nes-comments>

## Earth Day Clean Up

**April 17 (rain date April 24)**

Join the National Landing BID and Livability 22202 to clean up along the GW Parkway south of the Mount Vernon Trailhead at the Crystal City Water Park. (And get a look at some what may someday become accessible open space.) All necessary materials (bags, gloves, etc.) provided courtesy of the Alice Ferguson Foundation. Pre-registration and mask wearing is required and space is limited. After the cleanup, volunteers will exchange their collected trash for swag and a tasty treat! <http://bit.ly/gwppw-cleanup>.

## JBGS-BID Retail Community Forum April 21, 6:30pm-8pm

Provide your input at the Retail Community Forum, focused on street level retail. JBG Smith will share the latest on evolving retail trends and how they inform planning and overall retail strategy for Crystal Drive, Crystal City, and the National Landing area. Virtual, registration required: <http://nationallanding.org/do/retail-community-forum>

## Metropolitan Park Project Update April (date TBD)

The construction team will host a 2nd town hall with a virtual jobsite tour and live Q&A session. More details in the next construction update. Sign up at [metpark678.com](http://metpark678.com).

## Teens Experience - Join Park Corps! Applications due April 30

Teens, 16-18, work alongside Arlington's natural resource professionals in forestry, wildlife management, education, and habitat restoration in June 21-25 and August 2-6. Info and registration: [bit.ly/arlington-parks-corp](http://bit.ly/arlington-parks-corp)

## Movies in the Park

**Mondays in May, 8pm**

Join the National Landing BID for a month of outdoor movie nights at Virginia Highlands Park. Pre-registration will be required. [nationallanding.org/do/movies-in-the-park](http://nationallanding.org/do/movies-in-the-park)



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