



AURORA HIGHLANDS CIVIC ASSOCIATION

FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER

LOTS HAPPENING!

AHCA is doing its best to keep up with the unprecedented amount of activity happening in our neighborhood. Read on for details, and please remember to support our work with your yearly \$20 dues that can be paid online at aurorahighlands.org if you haven't already.



The Helix, (Photo courtesy Amazon)

Amazon Unveils New HQ2 "Helix" Building

It looks like Aurora Highlands will be the talk of the town for some time, as four new Amazon HQ2 buildings were unveiled February 2nd, showcasing a futuristic nature-theme building called the "Helix." The Helix is a 350-foot tall spiraling office building, and we've heard that it would be open to the public for select weekends every month. In addition to the office space totaling 2.8 million square feet among the other three 22-story buildings, there would be approximately three acres of open space, a dog run, and amphitheater. This will house most of Amazon's 25,000 area employees. Amazon plans to request approval from Arlington County by the end of 2021 and to start construction in 2022 with an anticipated end date of 2025. AHCA will be actively involved in this process; you can monitor the County project website at <https://projects.arlingtonva.us/projects/pen-place-2021/>

New coffee shop opens at Westpost (Pentagon Row)

Origin Coffee Lab and Kitchen is now open in the former Starbucks space in the courtyard between Basic Burger and Lebanese Taverna. The coffee shop has a variety of options, including five different origins of coffee to choose from, plus six methods of brewing. It also serves all-day breakfast like pancakes and benedicts as well as a "noon to night" menu with schnitzel and sliders. "Our whole concept is to have good food, coffee, and pastries all in the same place. Everything here is made from scratch, we don't outsource anything," says owner Andy Mekonnen. bit.ly/origin-clk

Next Meeting: Wednesday, February 10

7-9pm, Virtual -- Zoom / Facebook

<https://aurorahighlands.org/event/feb2021>

Cherry Blossom Festival

Find out what to expect as the Cherry Blossom Festival comes to our area and how you can help. Hear from Festival organizers as well as our local Neighborhood Champion volunteers.

Livability Open Space Report & Walking Path

Hear about the Open Space priorities for our area and progress to meeting these needs from our neighborhood working group lead.

Highlands Urban Garden

The Urban Garden installed at Virginia Highlands last year is doing well; find out more and how you can join this year.

2021 AHCA Budget

We'll review our spending for last year and the anticipated budget for 2021. This may include a vote to approve the budget; if so, the proposed budget will be published before the meeting on aurorahighlands.org.

See inside for articles on some of these items.

Read Up & Reach Out!



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18th Street South Project Moving Forward

Design work has been completed and the next step is preparing to release the construction contract for the competitive bid. Construction is anticipated to start in late 2021. This project will rebuild 18th Street South between Fern and Eads Streets in order to continue the existing South Hayes Street protected bike lane further east. The intersection of 18th Street South and South Fern Street will be rebuilt to remove the slip lane and reduce crossing distances. Also, the project will reduce the amount of impervious surfaces, add stormwater retention, replace a water main, and upgrade the streetscape.

<https://projects.arlingtonva.us/projects/18th-street-south-complete-street/>

Livability22202 Meeting on Development & Housing

Attend the Livability22202 Housing meeting on February 9 from 7-9pm to hear an overview of the county planning activities in our area for 2021 from Matt Mattauszek (county). Kimberly Driggins, Executive Director of the Washington Housing Conservancy, will speak on their recent partnership with Amazon to acquire Crystal House for \$377M, which will lead to the preservation and creation of 1,300 affordable homes. The Livability22202 Housing Working Group will also provide a summary and highlights of the Housing report issued in December and the ongoing Missing Middle Study and Listening Tour. Preregistration is required:

<https://livability22202.org/breaking-news/>

National Landing BID releases Mobility report

National Landing may soon become the most connected downtown in the U.S. The broad mix of transportation infrastructure already here is continuing to evolve, with a new emphasis on next-generation multimodal mobility. The public and private sectors are joining forces and investing more than \$4 billion into the transportation network to meet the needs of current and future residents, employees, students, and visitors. Read more at nationallanding.org/mobilitynext.

Help create a walking map for National Walking Day

WalkArlington is asking residents to share their favorite walking destinations/hidden gems in the neighborhood so they can share this information with others and encourage people to get out to explore new places on National Walking Day, Wednesday, April 7. Send your favorite places to walk in the neighborhood: parks, landmarks, public art, or other special spots to mary.dallao@walkarlington.com.

Thank you, Day of Service Volunteers

Resident Jane Green organized a park cleanup at Virginia Highlands Park on the January 18th, MLK Day of Service. About 25 people turned up to pitch in. Thank you to everyone who participated!

Cherry Blossom Festival Update

AHCA is an official partner of The National Cherry Blossom Festival this year! There will be activities throughout National Landing and Aurora Highlands including live music, exercise, art, and more at Virginia Highlands Park from March 20 - April 11. Tune in to our February AHCA meeting to learn more, and our dedicated page will have updates soon: <http://aurorahighlands.org/cherryblossom>
If you'd like to help organize activities at the park or throughout the neighborhood or to volunteer support, please email us at info@aurorahighlands.org.

Begin Decorating for the Petal Porch Parade! We invite you to unleash your creativity and share your cherry blossom spirit by taking part in the inaugural Petal Porch Parade. Put your DIY skills to the test and decorate your porch, yard, balcony or windows in springtime splendor. A virtual map with the locations of all registered Petal Porches will be created, so you can #StepIntoSpring and plan a walk or drive around our neighborhood to see and share in the celebration of spring. Early registrants receive a complimentary yard sign. Areas with the largest numbers of decorative houses will be treated to a surprise procession of "blossom cars" painted by local artists, so be sure to get everyone on the block in on the fun! We will post the registration link in our next newsletter and on social media as soon as it's available, but start your creative designs now!



Photo courtesy of nationalcherryblossomfestival.org

Origins of the Festival: The National Cherry Blossom Festival is a spring celebration in Washington D.C. commemorating the March 27, 1912, gift of Japanese Cherry Blossom trees from Mayor Yukio Ozaki of Tokyo City to the city of Washington, D.C. Mayor Ozaki donated the trees to enhance the growing friendship between the United States and Japan and also celebrate the continued close relationship between the two nations. Large and colorful helium balloons, floats, marching bands from across the country, music and showmanship are parts of the Festival's parade and other events.

Residential Parking Permit Changes, 3rd Update

Based on the vote at the January AHCA meeting to oppose the RPP, AHCA sent a formal letter to the County indicating opposition. See <https://aurorahighlands.org/news/proposed-rpp-changes> for the letter and other background correspondence. The Transportation Commission voted 7-2 on Feb 4 to endorse the proposed changes, but recommending deferring implementation of 2-hr paid parking until a firm enforcement plan is created to accompany rollout. It goes to the Planning Commission Feb 11th and finally to the County Board for approval on Feb 20th. You can send your own letters to countyboard@arlingtonva.us.

Livability22202 Open Space Workshop Report

Livability22202 is a grass-roots planning initiative of the Aurora Highlands, Crystal City, and Arlington Ridge Civic Associations, working jointly to encourage a holistic approach to development in our zip code. Four working groups, including one on Open Space, have been meeting to explore livability themes and make specific recommendations for incorporating them into 22202 planning initiatives.

Open space is key to achieving several livability priorities, including environmental sustainability, biophilic design, connected open space, eco-corridors, and community-building. The working group proposes four specific efforts for creation and enhancement of open space in 22202:

1. Connecting residents to the natural world and enhancing biodiversity throughout 22202
2. Re-envisioning Virginia Highlands Park as the backyard for the Pentagon City community
3. Developing a holistic approach to planning Crystal City
4. Exploring the possibility for a publicly accessible greenway from Roaches Run Waterfowl Sanctuary along the railroad tracks to the southern end of Crystal City

The full report is available at livability22202.org/open-space/.

What's going on at Roaches Run?

Have you noticed the markers in the water at Roaches Run? According to Aaron LaRocca of the NPS, "the NPS is trying to restore three acres of narrow-leaf cattail marsh at Roaches Run. The stakes and flagging are associated with goose exclosures. What you probably didn't see is the thousands of young cattails and arrow-arum being planted."

When asked about the plan for developing trails at Roaches Run, Mr. LaRocca also said that, "at this time we're not in a planning process for additional trails in the park. If you want to advocate for these trails, I think your best chance is to follow the CC2DCA conversation. Not sure how that effort will play out, but a public process will be required. That would be the

time for your community to create that trail connection to/around Roaches Run." For more info and charts that show how much open space Roaches Run provides see <https://aurorahighlands.org/news/roaches-run/>

Construction updates

Pentagon Centre (15th & Hayes): Pile driving finished way ahead of schedule. aurorahighlands.org/construction-milton/

MetPark/HQ2: Expect street closures on 15th Street Feb 5-7 and on 13th and Elm Streets periodically over the coming weeks. See metpark678.com for details.

1900 Crystal Drive: The demolition of the existing buildings is almost complete, and construction of the two new residential towers is about to begin. JBG held a public meeting this week to review construction schedules and impacts. The proposed haul route may not directly impact Aurora Highlands, and the pile driving may be far enough away for most of us. However, the sidewalk on the south side of 18th, around the construction site, will probably be closed for about 3-4 years. <https://projects.arlingtonva.us/projects/1900-crystal-drive/>

January AHCA Meeting Recap

Federal Realty provided more context to their proposal to relax retail conditions at Pentagon Row (now "Westpost"), assuaging fears that they are trying to get rid of the "full service" grocery (Harris Teeter). They claim to just need more flexibility in the requirements to be able to attract good tenants. Based on the conversation, AHCA expects to tell the County we are generally supportive of the changes, but do not want the grocery requirement loosened. This is expected to go before the County Board on Feb 20; send them your thoughts at countyboard@arlingtonva.us. If you have questions regarding Westpost development, email cherre@thelandlawyers.com. <http://bit.ly/pr-retail-changes>

Volunteers from ARLFiber explained how they believe the County could use its network to provide high speed fiber to all residents, with companies competing to provide Internet service. Their website at <https://ArlFiber.org> has the petition to sign for the neighbors that would like to join this initiative.

AHCA thanked Melwood for putting on the Miracle on 23rd Street event in December and members approved a \$250 donation for the event (34 yea, 0 nay).

Residents shared their views on the County's proposed changes to the Residential Permit Parking program. After discussion, a proposed motion to oppose specific changes was replaced with a motion to oppose all of the proposed changes, which passed (26 yea, 12 nay).

Minutes are online at aurorahighlands.org/documents/ and meeting recordings are at facebook.com/aurorahighlands/live.

Mark Your Calendar

Livability 22202: Construction Updates & Housing

Tuesday, Feb 9, 7-9pm

livability22202.org/breaking-news/

Pentagon City Planning Workshop

Monday, Feb 15, 6:30pm

Add your perspective at the third workshop for the Pentagon City Planning study to reevaluate long-term goals for this area with an emphasis on its transportation network. You can read more at <https://bit.ly/pc-planning-study>, where you can also sign up for updates and get a link for the virtual meeting.

FAA Airport Noise Survey: See results and submit your comments on this nationwide survey to measure the relationship between aircraft noise and annoyance to residents. Until Mar. 15 at <http://bitly.com/faa-noise-survey>

Engage with Arlington – Make your voices known!

"Engage Arlington" <https://topics.arlingtonva.us/engage/> highlights opportunities for public comments on County, private developers', and other projects. Here are a few of particular importance to our area:

- Changes to Crystal City Water Park, Feb 10. The Pedestrian Advisory Committee meeting will serve as a public forum to discuss changes for the beloved Water Park. All are welcome to attend – see <https://commissions.arlingtonva.us/pedestrian-advisory-committee-2/> Please RSVP through D. Patton. A video recording and minutes will be available.
- Vision Zero Public Engagement, Thursday, Feb 11. The Vision Zero Action Plan is Arlington County's road map for eliminating all transportation-related serious injuries and fatalities by 2030 and increase safe, healthy, and equitable mobility for all. For details or to submit comments online until Feb 28, see <https://transportation.arlingtonva.us/events/vision-zero-draft-action-plan-community-forum/>.
- First SPRC meeting for Crystal Plaza is Thursday, February 18. This JBGS project for two new residential towers, on 20th Street, just East of Route 1, will have a big impact on Aurora Highlands residents, as the plans include some realignment of The Underground and the first part of the long-sought realignment of Bell-Clark. Three SPRC meetings are scheduled. Follow the project: <https://projects.arlingtonva.us/projects/2001-clark-st/>
- Potomac Yard Land Bay C East will hold the second SPRC meeting Monday, March 1. The first SPRC meeting for this architecturally interesting pair of new residential buildings was held on Feb 1. The second meeting will focus on transportation and open space – important topics for 22202. <https://projects.arlingtonva.us/projects/potomac-yard-land-bay-c-east/>
- Talk to a County Board member on any topic at Open Door Mondays, every week from 7-8:30pm <https://countyboard.arlingtonva.us/open-door-mondays>



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Questions? Don't hesitate to call or text! 571.249.4382



SHRED, SHRED, SHRED

Bring your unwanted papers

February 20
11:30 AM – 1:00 PM

The Melwood Parking Lot
750 23rd Street S
Arlington 22202

To learn about our free community events, go to: gevaandjane.com/events

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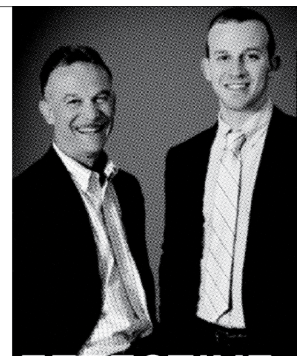
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