



AURORA HIGHLANDS CIVIC ASSOCIATION

JANUARY 2022 NEWSLETTER

NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

I appreciate the confidence you showed in me by nominating me and electing me as president of the civic association for 2022. I welcome the challenges that it will bring me. I haven't lived in the neighborhood since 2012, and while I still haven't moved back, I will be able to participate virtually thanks to the ease with which we have all transitioned to Zoom meetings over the last two years. I expect to spend the first month or two getting back up to speed on the issues facing our neighborhood, and learning how to do the newsletter again. I'm grateful to all of you who have worked together over the decade that Nick and I have been away, especially the Executive Committee of 2020 and 2021 who, under Scott Miles' leadership, have followed the projects that are so rapidly changing the place where we live, and through initiatives such as Livability22202, striving to keep our neighborhood safe, quiet, healthy and enjoyable. They accomplished all this while we all navigated the landscape of the pandemic.

I want you to know that I see my role primarily as facilitator of the Civic Association process, and receiver and interpreter of your concerns. I'll also serve as liaison and neighborhood representative to the county offices that are managing the major projects happening around us. I look forward to working with the AHCA Executive Committee this year, and I'm very grateful that many of you continue to follow the issues that concern you, and that you continue to report to us what's happening, what we need to know and when we need to take action.

-- Cory Giacobbe

AHCA 2022 Officers

AHCA members nominated candidates in October who were then elected in November. Our new 2022 AHCA officers are:

President: Cory Giacobbe Treasurer: Ben Watts
1st VP: Ben D'Avanzo Recording Secretary: Patty Pile
2nd VP: Jill Braun Corresponding Secy.: Natasha Atkins

COVID Updates from the County

COVID-19 test positivity rate is very high in Arlington after the holiday break, with daily new cases reaching all-time highs in the first week of 2022. For information on testing and vaccines in Arlington, visit

www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Programs/Health/COVID-19

Next Meeting: Wednesday, January 12

7-9pm, Virtual -- Zoom / Facebook
<https://aurorahighlands.org/event/jan2022>

Pentagon City Plan Update

Matt Mattauszek, Pentagon City/Crystal City planning coordinator with the County Planning Division, will give us a final overview of the Pentagon City Sector Plan. The Plan will be considered by the County Board in March.

Melwood GLUP Study Proposal

Larysa Kautz, President and CEO of Melwood, will introduce the proposed development of their site on 23rd Street, and answer our questions. See the newsletter article for more details on the proposal.

>> Dues are Due! <<

Please show your support for AHCA and our community by sending in your annual dues for 2022. It's only \$20 per household and helps support this monthly newsletter, community events, and other neighborhood building activities, and also lets you vote at meetings. Please pay online at aurorahighlands.org by clicking the "Donate" button to pay by PayPal. Checks can also be mailed to AHCA, P.O. Box 25201, Arlington, VA 22202. Thank You!

Read Up & Reach Out!



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Melwood's Housing Development Plans for 23rd St

The Civic Association received an email from Melwood on Dec. 17, 2021, informing us that they filed a General Land Use Plan (GLUP) Study with the County. The application proposes to amend the site's GLUP to "Low-Medium Residential", in order to rezone in the future to allow development of an affordable housing building with community programming and support services for people with disabilities. They are proposing to redevelop the property on 23rd Street with a new affordable 104-unit residential building, with 30 of those units set aside for people with disabilities. President and CEO of Melwood, Larysa Kautz, will attend our Jan. 12 Civic Association meeting to give an overview of the project and answer some of our questions.

Links: Melwood letter <https://bit.ly/melwood-23rd-letter>

ArlNow article <https://bit.ly/melwood-23rd-arlnow>

Washington Post article <https://wapo.st/3eUW1BK>



Pentagon City Planning Study

The comment period for the third and final draft of the Pentagon City plan update, which is now being deemed a "Sector Plan," closed at the end of the year. AHCA submitted comments [<https://bit.ly/pcps-resp3>] primarily renewing the concerns we've continued to raise throughout the process around inadequate community facilities and open space. The county is expected to release the final proposal in late January, which will then be considered by various county commissions and then the County Board in February and March.

Bowlero Use Permit

The use permit for Bowlero on 23rd St in Crystal City is up for renewal, and our comments were due to the County by Jan. 3, 2022. The AHCA executive committee submitted comments supporting renewing the use permit, but for no longer than a year, with the provision that Bowlero owners and managers take actions to manage crowds and noise, and reduce calls to the police related to the actions of their customers, and make the venue more appealing to local customers. <https://bit.ly/ahca-bowlero-jan2022>

Christmas Tree Collection

Special Pickup Jan. 10 – Jan. 21

Due to weather-related safety issues during the week of Jan. 3, special Christmas tree pick-up is now slated to begin the week of Jan. 10. Trees collected by the County the first two full weeks of January are turned into mulch available from County facilities. <https://bit.ly/arl-xmas-pickup>

Plastic Bag Tax Took Effect Jan. 1

Beginning January 1, 2022, a five-cent tax on single-use disposable plastic bags went into effect for grocery stores, convenience stores and drug stores in Arlington County, the City of Alexandria and Fairfax County. bit.ly/arl-bagtax-jan1

Dominion Substation Renovation

Dominion's substation between Glebe Rd. and Four Mile Run is slated for a renovation starting soon. <https://power.viz.com/Glebe/> site has some nicely done informative videos about the project. When finished, it should be more attractive and Four Mile Run will lose two of the huge power pylons. There will likely be detours along the bike trail during construction, so stay tuned for updates.

Miracle on 23rd Street

Miracle on 23rd St. took place on December 3, with a tree lighting, a visit from Santa, live music and refreshments. Since the event, hosted by Melwood, was largely virtual in 2020, it was nice to have an opportunity for the community to get together again. Melwood heard the concerns of the parents that the event started a bit late this year, and they said they'll try to schedule it earlier next year. Melwood appreciated our \$500 donation approved at the November AHCA meeting.

2022 Cherry Blossom Festival in AHCA?

Will Aurora Highlands celebrate the Cherry Blossom Festival again? We hope so, but much is dependent on the County. Volunteers from last year were invited to attend the official National Cherry Blossom Festival 2022 launch recently and it appears the Festival is enthusiastic about community participation. However big or small we participate this year, we will need volunteers to make it happen. Please contact us if you are interested in volunteering as a community volunteer for the festivities.

Thank You National Landing BID

Last year, the National Landing Business Improvement District (BID) [<https://nationallanding.org/>] provided a \$2,000 donation to AHCA to provide support for initiatives and programs run by the Civic Association in Spring and Summer. We did not properly thank them at the time, so would like to acknowledge and thank them for helping to support our activities, including this newsletter!

Development Updates

PenPlace Site Plan

The next phase of Amazon's HQ2 between Army-Navy Drive and 12th, and Fern and Eads had its 2nd Site Plan Review Committee (SPRC) meeting in December, addressing feedback from SPRC#1, Architecture, and Landscape Design. [<https://bit.ly/penplace-sprc2-dev>]. The project has replaced the prior approved PenPlace street grid with a large, park-like area that has a separate PenPlace Park Master Plan that just completed a second public comment period in December. Stay tuned for revised plans and further discussion perhaps. The January 24th 7pm SPRC meeting will be critically important because the topics will include transportation and community benefits. Please plan to attend. For more details, see <https://bit.ly/penplace2021>.



2250 Crystal Drive / 223 23rd St. S.

Crystal Plaza 5: JBGS is proposing two new residential towers - The East Tower, on Crystal Dr, will be 30 stories with 827 dwelling units; the West Tower, on 23rd, will also be 30 stories tall, but with 613 dwelling units. The project will include a realignment of 23rd Street between Crystal Drive and Route 1, including the elimination of Cheerio Park in the middle of 23rd and a partial realignment of Clark. The project will also continue the elimination of additional parts of the much-loved Underground. The SPRC process will start late winter-early spring. Preliminary plans are posted at <https://bit.ly/arl-SPLA19-00012>, albeit incomplete and not compiled.

Americana Hotel (1460 Richmond Highway)

JBGS has filed preliminary conceptual site plans with the County. By the end of the first quarter of 2022, they plan to submit a formal 4.1 site plan to replace the hotel with a by-right 19-story residential building with 650 residential units above retail. There will be 325 parking spaces across two below-grade parking levels. bKL Architecture is the designer. See this UrbanTurf article: <https://bit.ly/jbgs-replace-americana>. But first JBGS is proposing that the site be used for a staging area for the Amazon HQ2 headquarters at MetPark and PenPlace.

Transportation Updates

CC2DCA

Comments due January 9 on the latest Crystal City to Reagan National Airport Multimodal Study (CC2DCA) findings and process. The NEPA study will continue for at least one more year. The NEPA process, which ensures significant public engagement, recently posted its second online engagement, which runs from November 29 through January 9. In the second engagement, staff reviewed 14 potential corridors [<https://bit.ly/cc2dca-nov21-corridors>]. All but five were eliminated and then analyzed in conjunction with concepts (bridge, tunnel, or a hybrid) [<https://bit.ly/cc2dca-nov21-concepts>]. The Crystal City terminus for one of the remaining concepts lands between 20th and 23rd, east of Crystal Drive. Among the evaluation criteria are providing convenient connections to the new proposed VRE platform, the existing Metro airport platform, the Mt. Vernon Trail, and the New Security system at DCA, which now provides passenger access through one security portal. For more details see <https://bit.ly/arl-cc2dca>

Eads Street Concept Design - January 10 - 23

Online Engagement for S. Eads (12th -15th St S.) concept design. This project will provide complete streets upgrades along the northbound side of South Eads Street (East side) between 12th Street South and 15th Street South to improve travel conditions for all road users. The southbound side of the street will receive improvements as part of the Met Park Phase 6-8 development. Improvements being investigated include adding physical protection to the existing bike lane, reconstructing and realigning sidewalks, adding street lighting, and making necessary utility modifications and upgrades. Revised plans in this online engagement are based upon online community feedback from several months ago. See <https://bit.ly/eads-complete-12th-15th>

Aircraft Noise Mitigation Study

Comments due January 12. The third community meeting for the NowGen project, the Arlington County / Montgomery County joint Aircraft Noise Mitigation Study for communities north of Reagan National Airport (DCA) was held virtually on Monday, December 13, 2021. The study team provided a status update on the overall study, presented draft recommendations for departure procedures and addressed community comments and questions. Watch a recording of the conversation [<https://bit.ly/aircraft-noise-meeting3>] and review the presentation [<https://bit.ly/aircraft-noise-slides3>]. Send comments by January 12 to noise2020@arlingtonva.us. The NowGen website is at <https://dca.nowgen.net/>. County information on airplane noise is at <https://bit.ly/arl-airport-noise>.

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Calendar

See aurorahighlands.org/events/

Open Door Mondays

Every Monday, 7-8:30pm

Talk to a County Board member on any topic. bit.ly/arl-board-mondays

County Snow Removal

County website on snow removal: <https://bit.ly/arl-snow>. Also check on your neighbors and help if you can.

Christmas Tree Pickup

January 10-21

Ft. Scott Invasives Removal

Jan. 22, 10 am to Noon
During COVID, registration is required. Pre-register at <https://bit.ly/ft-scott-restore>

55+ Programs @ Aurora Hills

If you are 55 or older, check out the 55+ Pass programs at Aurora Hills. <https://bit.ly/arl-ah55plus>

Transportation, cont'd

VDOT Route 1 Study, January 19 (7-9 PM). The Crystal City Civic Association is hosting an update on the Rt 1 Study [<https://bit.ly/vdot-route1>], with VDOT and reps from our Livability22202 working group [<https://bit.ly/L22202-rt1>] responding with neighborhood residential reaction and comments. Preregistration required at <https://bit.ly/ccca-jan2022>.

Long Bridge Drive to S. Hayes Street Design public meeting, January 26, 7 pm; Jan. 24-Feb. 13 Online Engagement. The proposed design for Phase 1, along northern Crystal Drive and Eastern 12th St., part of the much larger Transitway Extension Project from Potomac Yards to Pentagon City [<https://bit.ly/arl-pc-transitway>].

18th Street Complete Street Project start has been delayed because of challenges coordinating this project with the Dominion Energy Crystal Substation. The completed project will create much safer intersections at Fern and Hayes and at 18th & Hayes and create new protected bike lanes on 18th between Fern & Hayes. bit.ly/arl-complete-18th
More information on all of these issues can be found at <https://aurorahighlands.org/>

Celebrate, the Carbon-Neutral Way

Over the years, AHCA has focused on green events. So we have reusable plates, utensils, and even a portable battery. Contact info@aurorahighlands.org to use for your events.

Newsletters & Social Media

We have heard from residents that really enjoy having a print newsletter. While we'll do our best to continue it, that will depend on continued support from advertisers and volunteers to assemble 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.

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January 2022 Balance: \$11,201