



AURORA HIGHLANDS CIVIC ASSOCIATION

MARCH 2022 NEWSLETTER

NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Neighbors,

Last month the County Board approved the Pentagon City Sector Plan after hearing comments from hundreds of neighbors who shared their concerns in writing, online and in person. One particular area of concern was the addition of the River House in the Sector Plan, and the proposed density on the site.

In response to the outpouring of concern from the neighborhood, JBGSmith, the developer of the River House property, has offered to hold listening sessions with the three Civic Associations in the 22202. We have accepted their offer to meet with us for our April 13 meeting.

In order to give us time to understand the Site Design process, to be clear in the role of the community going forward, and to gather our thoughts and ideas before meeting with JBGSmith, I have invited the County staff to meet with us at our March 9 meeting. They'll give a short presentation and then answer any questions we have.

- Cory Giacobbe

Cherry Blossom Festival

Cory and Natasha met with representatives from the county DPR, Amazon and National Landing BID to plan our participation in the Virginia portion of the National Cherry Blossom Festival. We are looking for a few volunteers to help with social media outreach and on site logistics on the day of the Kite Festival, March 27 (Rain date March 28). More activities are planned in our neighborhood. See article on Page 4 for more details.

AHCA Committees

The Zoning Committee met for this first time this month. We also would like to revive our Budget Committee, so we have an efficient system to spend the funds we accumulate, and our Publicity Committee, so that we can ensure we are reaching into all areas of our civic association boundaries. Please come with questions and think about volunteering.

>> 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!

Next Meeting: Wednesday, March 9

7-9pm, Virtual -- Zoom / Facebook
<https://aurorahighlands.org/event/mar2022>

AGENDA

7:00 pm - County Presentation on Site Development Process

Elise Cleva and Erika Moore of the County planning office will give us a short presentation on the Site Design development process and how we can be involved, and what type of input we can provide specifically in the JBGSmith development of the River House site.

7:45 pm - Management of the Arlington Deer Population

Arlington Regional Master Naturalists

Other Business

- Cherry Blossom Festival
- Zoning Committee Report
- Dominion Power digging locations
- New Business
- Adjourn

COVID Updates from the County

Masks are now optional in County facilities starting March 3.

Read the announcement [here](#).

Read Up & Reach Out!



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Pentagon City Sector Plan Approved by Count Board

On Saturday, February 12, 2022, the [Pentagon City Sector Plan](#) was unanimously approved by the County Board after more than 110 speakers commented on the plan, with the majority speaking against the plan, especially for RiverHouse. This marathon meeting was a fine example of "the Arlington Way" in action and ran for more than 10 hours, including presentations and Board discussion and votes.

On February 4, ARCA held an emergency meeting and voted to submit two documents to the County Board. On February 7, almost 100 people showed up to a final County-sponsored public forum on the plan and gave comments for more than two hours. After these meetings, County staff made a few additional adjustments to the plan, mainly for the RiverHouse site: a 250' building height maximum, expansion of open space across from West Post from .5 acre to 1 acre, and noting that topography and tree canopy protection would limit the number of future buildings added to RiverHouse (see slide 32 of the staff presentation to the County Board). Also see the supplemental Board report that includes other changes and discussions. ARCA and AHCA letters submitted earlier are included in Letters from the Public.

As Chair Cristol stated at the end of the very long Board meeting, this is not the beginning of the end, but the end of the beginning. The community will need to stay engaged with future Pentagon City planning as specific site plans are proposed to ensure that our needs are met - for affordable housing, usable open space, community centers, libraries, emergency services, a new elementary school, more child care facilities, and transportation facilities that actually meet our growing needs. To encourage new community engagement, staff have been invited to give community-specific presentations at upcoming meetings of [CCCCA](#), [ARCA](#), and [AHCA](#) - monitor websites for details!

PenPlace

The final, SPRC Virtual Public Meeting: [PenPlace](#) (Amazon HQ2) was held on February 10, at 7 p.m. Staff and the applicant covered new design changes and proposed community benefits. Staff reviewed the prior community benefits promised with MetPark 678, then explained the difference between PenPlace site improvements commitments (transportation and public art) vs. those proposed for earning additional density (the high school space, public space, child care center, public access to the Helix, access to the underground meeting area for County-sponsored events, cash for affordable housing, and commitments towards sustainable design. Dr. Barbara Thompson, Principal of the Arlington Community High School gave a presentation about the high school and how it would fit into PenPlace and the broader community. Staff added an updated [design guideline](#) and [MMTA, statt report, staff and applicant slidedecks](#), and an APS [factsheet](#) and [documentary](#) on the high school. Community representatives on the SPRC continued to express concerns about local community value of open space, impact on traffic, lack of protected bike lanes on 12th street, and how and when much needed new community facilities would be provided, such as a new elementary school, library, community center, fire station. Additional opportunities for public comment on PenPlace will be during these upcoming dates for commission and Board review of the PenPlace plans, including Transportation Commission (March 28), Planning Commission (April 4), and County Board April 23.

Did you know you can view and touch the PenPlace building material boards in the lobby of 1770 Crystal Drive M-F, 9-6 (and don't forget to pick up free bananas from the banista before 3PM)

Crystal Plaza 5 (2250 Crystal Drive/223 23rd Street South)

Send comments by March 14!

All are invited to participate in an online feedback opportunity. Please visit the project [webpage](#).

- First, review the study materials:
 - [Online Engagement Session Presentation](#) | [Slides](#) | [Revised Block Plan](#)
- Next, provide comments by **11:59 p.m. on Monday, March 14, 2022:**
 - [Online Feedback Form](#)

JBGS proposes to redevelop Crystal Plaza 5, the site on the southern portion of Block M in Crystal City. JBGS plans to construct two new 30-story residential towers with retail on the first floor. The East Tower would have 827 units; the West Tower 613. Rezoning from C-O to C-O-Crystal City Mixed Use will require changes to Block Plan M, the PDSP, a site plan amendment, and a new site plan. New park space/open space for CCSP #10 and #11 parks will be incorporated. Some of the existing Crystal City Underground at the south end will be removed and reconfigured. [4.1 Site plans](#) are posted – check out the architectural perspective views for the West Tower and East Tower! This project will also start the County's realignment of [23rd](#) East of Route 1, with construction coordinated with the [New Century Center](#) residential property across 23rd Street. Public engagement and County planning meetings are anticipated to begin shortly. Plans are still under County review.

Melwood

Check out the presentation by Scott Gibson, Chief Strategy Officer for Melwood, from the [January 12th AHCA meeting](#). They plan to build a new residential building on the Melwood site on 23rd Street South. The new building would have 130-units of affordable housing, with 30 units set aside for people with disabilities. You can find more background information in the January 2022 AHCA newsletter. The Melwood [Tier 1](#) application will be in County Tier 1 review in March and April, after which it will be reviewed through LRPC on April 27. Send questions and comments to sgibson@melwood.org

South Eads Street Residential

The South Eads Street Residential project is relatively small, but unusual. The two lots straddle two differently zoned areas, only one of which is currently within the Crystal City Sector Plan boundaries. Also unusual is that the proposal is for approximately 18 residential units with some shared features such as kitchens. The LRPC reviewed the request on October 20, 2021 and recommended that the project be approved to continue to a GLUP Tier 2 study. The earliest the Tier 2 study might start is mid-2022.

Transitway Extension to Pentagon City Phase 2a/2b

On February 8, staff held a public engagement to explain the next two phases of the transitway project, which covers the design of the Transitway along 12th Street S. from Long Bridge Drive to S. Hayes Street. This [plan](#) shows how buses traveling on the outside lanes in Crystal City will transfer to the inside lanes west of Eads, although the intersection at Eads looks challenging for all travelers. This [plan](#) shows how buses will travel from Eads to west of Fern. This project is closely tied to plans for the Pentagon City Sector Plan and PenPlace – and as currently designed, does not include safe bicycle infrastructure along these blocks of 12th Street. Can we change this?

Crystal City Water Park

JBGS has closed off access to the park as demolition begins in order to prepare for the redesign of the park. Deconstruction of some of the infrastructure has started and trees have either been removed or protected with fencing. Watch for detours in the area of the Park, although the Mt. Vernon Trail access will remain, at least most of the time. Projected completion date is February, 2023, with soft opening that spring. Send questions to waterpark@jbgsmith.com

Route 1 Multimodal Improvements Feasibility Study ([link](#))

Eric Cassel, the CCCA president, invited VDOT staff to the January 19, 2022 CCCA meeting to give a summary of Phase 1 study results and plans for Phase 2. Presenters were Dan Reinhard, VDOT project manager, and John Martin, Kimley-Horn, project consultant. Three members of the Livability 22202 Route 1 Working Group participated in a panel discussion moderated by Brian Harner. Carol Fuller, CCCA, described how Livability 22202 has been involved with the project; Pamela Van Hine, AHCA, talked about bike-ped safety with an at-grade Route 1 at 18th Street, and Arthur Fox, ARCA, discussed the implications of traffic diversion from Route 1 and how growing density might make traffic much worse without sufficient Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs. Developing an effective TDM program, exploring lowering the maximum speed to 25mph, further study of preferred option 3 (at grade intersections at 15th and 18th, with 7 lanes at 15th and 6 lanes at 18th, some plans to increase safety at 23rd and Route 1, and exploring a bike-ped passage across Route 1 at an at-grade 18th are among the proposed Phase 2 VDOT project. The community wants more, however – see prior comments on the Route 1 Working Group [website](#) and watch for new public engagements and commentaries. You can see the VDOT presentation by clicking this [link](#). The meeting agenda powerpoint can be found [here](#). The recording can be found [here](#).

After the CCCA meeting, Livability 22202 Route 1 Working Group members Carol Fuller and Pamela Van Hine prepared a Livability 22202 letter to Dan Reinhard with specific requests for Phase 2 project activities. The February 27, 2022 letter can be found on the Livability 22202 Route 1 Working Group [page](#). Eric also updated AHCA members during the February 9 AHCA meeting. Watch for a VDOT announcement for the first Phase 2 Public Engagement - coming soon!

18th Street South Complete Streets Project (Eads to Fern) ([link](#))

Construction has finally started on this project which will create a protected bike lane on 18th between Fern and Eads, create a T-shaped intersection between 18th & Hayes, and construct a much safer intersection design at 18th & Fern. Notice the plywood shelters on both sides of Hayes to hold supplies for the project and markings on the street and sidewalks indicating future work to be done. The deconstruction of the median between Fern and Eads has been completed. The continuing combination of construction activity from this project and Dominion Power across Hayes will make traveling through this area challenging until both projects are completed. The 18th Street project is due to be completed by mid-2023, although it's already a few months behind schedule.

Short Bridge Park ([link](#))

Construction has finally started on Short Bridge Park, a new County park in the far southeast corner of 22202, above the 4 Mile Run Trail east of Route 1. A critical preliminary site improvement was identified for the project site that Arlington County DES has advanced through design and which is now ready for construction. The improvement will consist of a 10-foot-wide concrete trail connecting the northbound Route 1 Trail with the Four Mile Run Trail extending east-west beneath Route 1, as well as removal of a section of sidewalk to accommodate a simpler connection to the Four Mile Run pedestrian bridge. View the extensive construction plans [here](#). Note that the shared use Route 1 path over Four Mile Run has been closed due to ongoing construction.

Amenities to be added include a plaza offering views of Four Mile Run and the City of Alexandria skyline; a riverfront overlook where people can step off the Four Mile Run Trail and get closer to the water; pathways for shared pedestrian and bicycle use throughout the park, and a 4,500-5,000 square foot "dog run" with artificial turf. Public art, still to be designed, will also be added. Because the paved pathways lie within the Chesapeake Bay Resource Protection Area, they will be offset by a new, 26,000 square foot riparian meadow that will improve stormwater absorption, help prevent erosion and offer habitat for wildlife. The County also will plant more trees, for a total of about 82 trees across the park.

Announcements**National Cherry Blossom Festival Returns In-Person March 17-April 17!**

Learn more about the National Cherry Blossom Festival events [here](#). Virginia Highlands park will again be a site for local celebrations: Come to [Virginia Highlands Park](#) on **Sat., March 26, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.** for a day of fun for the whole family as we celebrate Arlington's own [Blossom Kite Festival](#)! This free event will feature live entertainment, inflatables, art projects, games, food trucks, and, of course, kite flying! Free kite kits will be handed out to the first 100 attendees. No registration required. Learn more [here](#). Also consider creating a Petal Porch to celebrate the return of the cherries: Get into the spring spirit and decorate your porch, yard or balcony for spring and the [Cherry Blossom Festival](#). Think cherry blossoms, pink, springtime or with an original theme. [Petal Porches](#) encourages area residents to decorate a porch, yard, sidewalk, window, or something else visible from the street or sidewalk for a chance to win special cherry blossom prizes. To enter, [sign up online](#) by **March 16**. Be creative with your porch name and when describing your display. Even better, get your neighbors to register to compete for Best Blossom Block! Learn more [here](#). Last year Aurora Highlands had some fabulous porches!

Participate Now in Arlington's [First Annual Safety Feedback Form](#) (due March 28)

The County's Vision Zero program staff are soliciting community feedback on transportation safety needs and challenges. By answering this nine-question survey, you will help Arlington's Vision Zero team learn more about local transportation safety issues and challenges. The 2022 safety feedback form is open now through March 28, so act now.

English / Spanish / Mongolian / Amharic / Arabic / Chinese Please share this opportunity to provide meaningful feedback on transportation safety. The more people we hear from, the more we will understand where we can expand and improve our Vision Zero safety program to best meet the needs of the community.

[County Coordinates Free Tax Preparation for Those in Need](#)

The County lists several voluntary groups that provide free tax preparation to those in need. The website includes what materials the participant will need to bring as well as details on the volunteer group, dates, location, and how to make an appointment.

FY 2023- FY 2032 Capital Improvement Plan through Mar. 15

Share your thoughts on how Arlington should invest in major infrastructure for the future. Your input will help inform the County Manager's proposed 10-year Capital Improvement Plan.

Arlington Friends of Urban Agriculture - Spring Garden Kickoff, Saturday, March 12

The Arlington FOUA is co-hosting this event with the County Central Library on Saturday, March 12, from 10AM-2PM. Activities include: an expert-led panel discussion of growing with climate change, garden tours and demonstrations, seed and seedling giveaways, tool clinic and swap, and more! Learn more about the event and preregister through this [link](#).

Help RIP (Remove Invasive Plants)!

You can make a difference in our County parks! Removing invasive plants is the first step in habitat restoration. Events are held throughout the county on a weekly basis - [check out our calendar](#). Want to learn more about invasive plants in Arlington County? [Visit our webpage](#). The next RIP event at **Ft. Scott** is March 26. See the upcoming Ft. Scott schedule [here](#).

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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

DPR Spring Programs - Sign Up NOW!

Follow this link to sign up for camps, sports and programs for kids, adults and seniors.

HOG Pull, Saturday

March 5, 2022, 9-11am

Invasive Plant Pull

Meet at Haley Park, 2400 S.

Meade St., Arlington, VA 22202

Please preregister at

<https://environment.arlingtonva.us/trees/invasive-plants/>

Ft. Scott Invasives Removal

March 26, 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>

Black History Month: Special Event: Reclaiming the Lost Identity of Arlington County through the Lens of Green Valley

On February 24th, the National Landing BID co-hosted this special event at the Black Heritage Museum of Arlington. Although the focus of the presentations was Green Valley (formerly Nauck), speakers briefly touched on Freeman's Village, Queen's Village, and other Black communities in National Landing. If you missed the event - or wanted to share it - here's the [link](#).

Smithsonian Institution Celebrates Women's History Month with Women's Futures Month

From March 5 to 27, the Arts + Industries Building's *FUTURES* exhibition, the National Museum of Natural History, the National Air and Space Museum, and Smithsonian Gardens will partner to host the Smithsonian debut of *#IfThenSheCan - The Exhibit*, the largest collection of statues of women ever assembled together, to be installed on and around the National Mall. The 120 life-size 3D-printed statues are of a diverse coalition of contemporary women STEM innovators and role models leading a variety of fields, from protecting wildlife, discovering galaxies, building YouTube's platform, to trying to cure cancer.

Target, Nighthawk Pizza, Korean hot dogs, and Girl Scout cookies are coming!

According to this [ARLNow](#) story, Nighthawk Pizza will finally open - in late March, after many supply chain issues. The opening of the rice-based [Oh-K Dog & Egg Toast](#) restaurant, which replaces Taj of India on Restaurant Row, is also due to open in March. Meanwhile, Girl Scout cookies are coming to many locations, according to [ARLNow](#), though apparently not in 22202. We hope that some enterprising Girl Scouts will continue the tradition of selling them by the Metro stops! And perhaps soon we can use this [environmentally friendly delivery service](#) to bring all of these goodies to our homes! Signs in the windows of the new Target store in West Post indicate that the store will open April 3!

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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March 2022 Balance: \$13,143