



AURORA HIGHLANDS CIVIC ASSOCIATION APRIL 2026 NEWSLETTER




A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Neighbors,

It's still "one battle after another" here in Aurora Highlands in the effort to maintain livability and preserve Nellie Custis School!

On March 13, the Virginia Legislature approved the fast moving Faith In Housing legislation that will allow by-right affordable housing development for non-profits (see March issue). A consortium of over a dozen civic associations lobbied to carve out the "copycat" provision, and to request more time to review the impacts. Nevertheless, the bill is now on the Governor's desk - and still unsigned as of press time. **Our reps Adele McClure and Elizabeth Bennett-Parker will be at our Special Meeting on April 9, 6 pm (NOTE THE DATE IS THURSDAY)** to discuss this and other state issues like the lowering and elevated portion of Route 1. ***This meeting is in addition to our regular meeting on April 8.***

On March 18, thanks to the many letters that were sent, and the people who came to speak, HALRB agreed with us and **voted to recommend the Local Historic District for Nellie Custis School** (more inside). Literally, one of the HALRB members counted the number of people that showed up in the room from the public who were for and against. But, the recommendation won't be meaningful unless the County Board agrees. The latest word from the County is that the Planning Commission will hear the LHD nomination in **June. If you haven't sent a letter there is still time & it makes a difference, please write:**

County Board at countyboard@arlingtonva.us and president@aurorahighlands.org, where we will batch the letters. 

Our regular meeting is on April 8, where we will hear from WestPost about their request to replace the Walgreens on Joyce Street with a bookstore - see inside for more, a representative from Doorways will present, and Anne Bodine will inform us about the "Arlington 2050" Comprehensive Plan update.

The civic fun continues on **April 21, the last day to vote in the Virginia Special Referendum on Redistricting**. Other: we still have an opportunity to comment on the bridge to DCA & there is a **Construction Town Hall on Crystal House April 7** - see details inside & back cover. Don't forget to check out the calendar for many events this spring! Thank you,

Stacy Meyer, President



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Special Meeting w/McClure & Bennett-Parker

Virginia Reps - Faith in Housing, Rt 1++

Thursday, April 9, 2026

At: Aurora Hills Recreation Center

735 18th St S, Arlington, VA | 6:00-7:00 pm

Optional: Register via Zoom: <https://bit.ly/VaLegSpecialMeeting>

Next Regular Meeting:

Wednesday, April 8, 2026

At: Aurora Hills Recreation Center

735 18th St S, Arlington, VA | 7:00-9:00 pm

refreshments & social at 6:30 pm

AGENDA

6:30 pm Doors open - social

7:00 pm Announcements

7:05 pm Diana Ortiz, Doorways

7:20 pm Anne Bodine, ASF,

Arlington 2050

7:40 pm Geoff Sharpe, WestPost

(Pentagon Row)

8:00pm AHCA Business

9:00pm Adjourn (latest)

Optional: Register via Zoom

<https://bit.ly/2026AHCA>

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HALRB RECOMMENDS LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT FOR NELLIE CUSTIS SCHOOL BIG WIN FOR THE AURORA HIGHLANDS CIVIC ASSOCIATION

No one at the Historic and Landmark Review Board (HALRB) will soon forget the battle cry of long time resident of the Highlands, builder **Rob Douglas**, at the March 18, 2026 meeting on the Nellie Custis Local Historic District Application. In speaking about his work as a remodeler in Alexandria - he asked:

“In all the jobs I’ve done in Alexandria, guess how many buildings I’ve demolished?- that’s right - ZERO - that’s because they just don’t let it happen that way in Alexandria.”

As the closing speaker for “team preserve”, his words hit home! Rob spoke in addition to the others of those that argued the HALRB needed to review the historic merits, and finally put the politics of Density Only (density at any cost) development aside. After a dizzying number of straw polls, moves, and counter-moves including a dictionary lookup and debate over the word “suitable” as in is the building “suitable” for restoration, Chair **Kaydee Myers** took a vote on a Local Historic District for just the historic building, consistent with the AHCA “Alternative Envelope,” which **passed 7 to 4**. The HALRB recommendation will go to the **Planning Commission in June and then the County Board** - but based on past performance, it is far from a given that either panel will uphold the position of the HALRB.

THANKS TO YOU, AHCA - we have a change.org petition with over 250 signatures, we sent in 44 letters including from individuals and letters of support from the **Lyon Village, Shirlington and Lyon Park Civic Associations, the Arlington Civic Federation, the Pappas Trust** on 23rd Street among others. In addition to neighbors that came out (see Props back page) to speak, big thanks to **Audrey Clement & Billy Bayne - independent candidates for County Board** who spoke in support, **Natalie Roy** past County Board candidate and **Jim Devita democratic County Board candidate** who came out to support, **Tom Dickinson**, from **Save Historic Arlington** and **Jean Hencforth** who is working to preserve the LAC Center on Langston Blvd also spoke. **But, you won’t find any of that in the local media coverage! The ARLNOW 3/20 article included Melwood’s press release that was dismissive of the HALRB decision instead.**

It is mind-boggling that not much has changed since the 1776 town square, and in 2026 showing up in person and making a speech, is still what matters at these hearings. **It is crazy to have to ask residents to come out two more times to say the same thing to two more panels. Welcome to Arlington! Virtual counts, but in the room is better because Arlington’s boards and commissions take note of attendance.**

Make sure you have joined are getting the email newsletter and are on the listserv - see front page for instructions. That will be the channel for updates that happen between newsletters. If you are not getting the newsletter by email, you are not on that channel.

BRIEF UPDATE ON THE BRIDGE TO DCA “CC2DCA”

Comments were due March 29, but the County has given us more time to consolidate comments to their presentation that is available at this link.

<https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Projects/Project-Types/Transportation-Projects/CC2DCA-Multimodal-Connection>

AHCA sent in questions including: Arlington was not originally going to pay for this bridge, but now its over budget and there is approx 10M coming from Arlington. Unfortunately, there is little info on how it is being paid for.

Programming is still in the air - VRE will add a 2 block long platform to the bridge from Crystal City metro stop but no plans were shown. Some would like Amtrak to make a stop for train to airport transfer, but there is not a firm commitment. Pick up and drop off, number of elevators, projections on number of users, whether the bridge is covered, or if there are bike lanes are still unknown.

Copy the AHCA email address: president@aurorahighlands.org & we will consolidate additional questions in April.



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22202 Headlines



RETAIL

- Paris Baguette, 2000 S. Bell Street opening this Spring
- Free evening & weekend parking ended at most garages in National Landing, with \$6 max instead.
- Twins Ace now Opening May 29 2051 S. Bell Street - soft open April 7
- Open Rewards now available at participating National Landing businesses 10% cash back: <https://www.openrewards.com/communities/national-landing>
- Met Park Farmers Market open Tues 10am - 2pm and Sat 9 am - 1 pm
- Trivia @ McNamaras Mon 7pm, Highline Mon 7 pm, Crystal City Sports Pub Tues 7:30 pm, WaterBar (beginning April 13) Mon 7pm

GOVERNMENT

- There is a hearing on the Missing Middle lawsuit, regarding whether the county followed proper procedures when approving its policy, on April 8, 2026 at 10 am. See Calendar for virtual listening option
- Arlingtonians for Our Sustainable Future is closely following the Comp Plan updates "Arlington 2050" and found the County Manager called the original framework goal of being a "safe, healthy, convenient and prosperous community and an attractive place to live and work," "**way out of date.**" See more at <https://www.asf-virginia.org/>. Anne Bodine from ASF will update us briefly at the April 8 AHCA meeting.
- Arlington Community High at Amazon HQ2 to open this August
- The county is seeking comments to its 10 year CIP by April 23 - <https://publicinput.com/cipengagement>
- Arlington ReGen improvements at the wastewater plan will begin later this year - no major impacts expected - <https://arlingtonregen.com/>
- National Landing demographics updated : <https://nationallanding.org/data-dashboard>

DEVELOPMENT

- Federal Realty (Pentagon Row/Westpost), says Walgreens at 1301 S. Joyce St. is unlikely to renew their lease, and they have been unable to find a replacement. Federal Realty requested removing Site Plan Condition 52, which requires a drug store and grocery store. They are seeking to replace Walgreens with a bookstore and noted that although the current grocer, Harris Teeter, has not indicated a desire to leave, this change would give Federal Realty more flexibility in the future. Federal Realty will present the request at the AHCA April 8 meeting.
- A site plan amendment was filed for the former TSA Office Buildings/ 601 and 701 12th Street South to abandon existing plans to demo the existing building and instead convert the towers into mixed-use w 637 apartments & 31K SF of retail. If approved, construction could begin this year.

PROPS:

Thank you to those who sent a letter on the Local Historic District - IT MADE A DIFFERENCE - and to those who came in person & spoke including **Rob Douglas, Rachel Hicks, Cindy Lips**, in addition to AHCA officers **Nick, Ben & Stacy.**

Tonya Finlay thank you!! for stepping in behind the scenes with super helpful organizational advice!

Dana Bres set up the April 9 meeting with Virginia delegates - Thanks again, Dana!

Basil Kiwan, thank you for agreeing to be a liaison to the 23rd Street Block Party planning!

Regina Barrett, thanks for agreeing to help distribute newsletters!

PLEASE email president@aurorahighlands.org if you are curious, interested or committed and / **or just show up at a meeting!** Please don't be shy! **Any and all help is welcome and appreciated.**

AHCA is committed to inclusivity and open, civil dialogue.



SPRING IN BLOOM
Lily on 23rd Street
photo: Peter Hylon

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CRYSTAL HOUSE CONSTRUCTION - UPDATES

Crystal House construction is in full swing and many people are asking how to get updates.

- If you aren't on on the list-serv, get on it! See page one, bottom right corner, mid-month updates are sent out when we get them.
- **There is a Construction Town Hall Meeting April 7 - see Calendar for details**
- There is a monthly update on Crystal House 7&8 by the developer EYA, via Teams 3rd Thursday of the month - meeting details are sent via the listserv
- Visit this website: <https://www.crystalhouseprogress.com/>
- County communications: Kiara Candelaria Nieves, DES, Communications & Public Engagement kcnieves@arlingtonva.us

Calendar

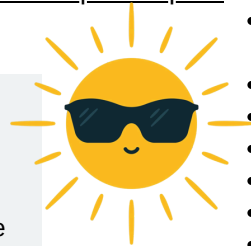
APRIL

- Apr 7: Crystal House Construction Town Hall. 1900 Building 1st Floor Clubroom 6:30 PM. CH3, 7 & 8
- Apr 8: Missing Middle Hearing 10 am <https://www.vacourts.gov/courts/scv/home>
- Apr 8: **AHCA Meeting 7 pm, 6:30 pm doors open**
- **Apr 9: Special Meeting 6:00 PM with Virginia Reps McClure & Bennett Parker**
- Apr 9: Pink Beats at Waterpark 5 - 8 pm
- Apr 10: Art of Pink pop up gallery Met Park 5 - 10 pm
- Apr 11: Ribbon Cutting Arlington Junction Park, 1051 S. Eads, 10 am
- Apr 12: Highline Profs & Pints: "Plastic Surgery" 6 - 8:30 PM
- Apr 14: Public Hearing on School Board 2027 Budget, 7 pm
- Apr 16: School Board Meeting, 7 pm
- Apr 17: Crystal House 7&8 Teams Update
- Apr 18: Walk&Learn Vision Zero 10 am Pent City Metro East
- Apr 18: County Board Meeting 9:30 am -budget worksessions
- Apr 19: Highline Profs & Pints: "Persephone" 6 - 8:30 PM
- **Apr 21: Virginia Special Referendum Vote on Redistricting - no school - <https://www.vpap.org/redistricting/2026/>**
- Apr 22: Arlington County Budget Adoption & Earth Day!



UPCOMING EVENTS

- Sunday Art Series "MOCA on the Move" at Met Park / MOCA thru May. 10 am. Details at EventBrite
- Sunday (biweekly) Jazz Palette at Waterpark paint-n-sip 5:30 PM <https://www.nlwaterpark.com/event/jazz-palette/> for tickets
- Free fitness classes at Potomac Yard - Sundays 2 - 3 pm starting April 12 - tickets at EventBrite 3639 S. Glebe Rod
- **May 2: Joyce & 18th Block Party 5pm (rain date May 3, 4 pm)**
- May 9: Arlington History Fest, Kenmore Middle School, 10am to 5pm
- May 15: Bike to Work day - www.biketoworkmetrodc.org
- May 16: Arlington Palooza, 1 - 6 PM, Lubber Run - EventBrite
- May 30: Aurora Hills Library 100 Year Celebration, 12 - 4 pm.
- June 6: Pride Month Block Party on S. 23rd Street



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