

CRYSTAL CITY INSIDER

The monthly newsletter of the Crystal City Civic Association



January 2022

HAPPY NEW YEAR 2022!

President's Corner

Thanks to all who participated in our surveys. The results are in a separate article. Next month we will have a new survey, so stay tuned.

We will be having our January 19th meeting at 7:00. Right now we hope to have it hybrid (both at 251 18th St S and on Zoom). But if the number of COVID cases continues at the current pace, we may just be on zoom.

Most of the meeting will be on Route 1. Our first guest is Dan Reinhard from VDOT. He will be presenting information about the Phase 2 planning. To help everyone understand the issues, we will follow that with a discussion by several Livability22202 experts.

Lastly, winter can be a tough time for people. As a result, we will also have a presentation by a county health official on mental health resources.

Bird of the Month: during winter, this White-Throated Sparrow comes and visits us.



(I took this at Huntley Meadows).

- Eric Cassel, CCCA President

CIVIC ASSOCIATION AND LIVABILITY 22202 ISSUES

Save the Date for the Next CCCA Meeting: January 19, 7-9 pm

We plan to devote most of the meeting to updates on Route 1. VDOT's Senior Project Manager Dan Reinhard will provide an updated timeline for Phase 2 and a Livability22202 panel will respond with neighborhood residential reaction and comments. We will also have Carol Layer, the Director of the DHS Behavioral Healthcare Division on County Mental Health Services. [Register here.](#)

Results of Polls

We did two polls in the past month. The first was a general poll about the Civic Association. The main results were

- 1) Hybrid was ok, but needed improvement
- 2) Facebook and Nextdoor were the two most used social platforms
- 3) The top topics were The Underground, JBGS Development, Amazon Development and General Transportation.

We also did a poll about the Bowlero. The results were really evenly mixed, so as an Association, we could not take a stand on the annual license renewal.

Overall, the surveys were really helpful in focusing our attention on some important issues and topics members want to see discussed. Our next meeting will feature Route 1, because it is at an unusual stage and we have an opportunity to hear from VDOT about the process and proposal. In future meeting, the Underground and Development issues will be front and center.

[Please click here for a link to the results.](#)

REMINDER: Annual Dues Payment coming Up Soon

Annual dues are paid for the calendar year, so payment of \$10 will be due **no later than February 28** for members to remain on the mailing list as voting members to receive the monthly Newsletter and Updates. Renew [online by PayPal](#) or send a check to our new Treasurer Steve Miller, 1300 Crystal Drive #408S, Arlington VA 22202.

CRYSTAL CITY (AND NEARBY)

Development/Construction Timelines

The following timelines are very tentative but will give residents an idea of what to expect and when from a variety of projects. We go over these timelines at our CCCA meetings as well. The County has changed its [website](#). Go here to see the [MyArlington](#) map of projects. You can also check the [National Landing BID Development Map](#).

Upcoming Meetings and Deadlines:

- January 3, 6 pm: [County Board Organizational Meeting and Meeting with the Civic Federation](#)
- January 9: [CC2DCA](#) feedback due
- January 12, 7-9 pm: [Pedestrian Advisory Commission](#) (PAC) on Route 1 VDOT Study
- January 10 – 23: Online Engagement: [S. Eads \(12th -15th St S.\)](#) Concept Design
- January 13, 7 pm: [S. Eads Street \(12th – 15th Street\)](#) Concept Design public meeting
- January 18 - 31 Online Engagement: [Army Navy Drive PBL \(aka – “Missing Link”\)](#) – Concept Design
- January 19, 7 pm: [Army Navy Drive PBL \(aka – “Missing Link”\)](#) – Concept Design public meeting
- January 19, 7-9 pm: CCCA Meeting on Route 1
- January 24, 7 pm: [SPRC #3 PenPlace](#) meeting
- Jan. 24-Feb. 13 Online Engagement: [Transitway Extension Phases 2A/2B](#) – Long Bridge Drive to S. Hayes Street – 30% / 60% Design checkpoint
- January 26, 7 pm: [Transitway Extension Phases 2A/2B](#) – Long Bridge Drive to S. Hayes Street – 30% / 60% Design public meeting
- January 27, 7 pm: Transportation Commission (Pentagon City Planning Study)

New Information:

- [Water Park redesign](#): construction delayed start to mid-**January**; completion winter/spring 2023
- [2000/2001 S Bell](#): **construction expected to begin by early January 2022**
- [Dining in the Park \(2121 Crystal Drive\)](#): New tenant “Surreal” announced; working through Arlington County permitting with an update on construction timeline in **January 2022**

- Metro Entrance Plaza Upgrade by BID started in November; completion possibly in **March**

No Change In Information:

- [223 23rd Street/2250 Crystal Drive site plan](#); southern end of Block M; internal demolition of building and relocation of Underground exit to Crystal Drive done; possible SPRC in first quarter 2022; February demolition of some structures
- Americana Hotel: preliminary plans filed; formal 4.1 site plan by the end of 1Q 2022 for a residential building to replace the hotel; request for construction parking for MetPark filed
- [18th Street Complete Street Project](#), construction started in December
- Crystal Square Central District Construction/Opening: Tacombi Taqueria opened December; Grocery still not announced but construction underway and scheduled to open by first quarter 2022; Alamo Draft House has started its build out and may open spring 2022
- [MetPark Amazon HQ2 and Park](#): Construction October 2021 to mid-2023
- 241-251 18th Street renovation of plazas on both sides of 241; construction of green areas on 18th Street as well as the plazas is expected through February 2022
- [Second Crystal City Metro Entrance](#), 30% design anticipated November/December 2021
- [South Eads Street Complete Street](#) – 12th St. S. to Army Navy Drive, 90% design, Final Engineering & Design – Winter 2021
- [South Eads Street Complete Street – 12th Street S to 15th Street S](#): Final concept design – Spring-Summer 2022
- [Transitway Extension to 12th Street and 12th Street Complete Project](#): construction Spring 2022 for 12 months (simultaneous with Transitway Extension Segment 1); Construction on the first segment is expected to start in the winter of 2022 with completion in late 2023.
- [15th Street/Clark Bell Realignment](#), 90% design
- VRE Design for New Station: final design 2021-2022; award and construction 2022-2024
- Boundary Channel (VDOT): award contract summer 2021; construction 2022; target construction completion fall 2023
- 101 S 12th Street: approved by County Board December in 2020; no construction until tenant signed; Gateway Park design when construction finished in 2-3 years
- [New Park at South Eads Street and Army Navy Drive](#): Project approved by CB June 2021; Design Process Begins 4th Quarter 2021; Construction Begins 1st Quarter 2023 and ends 1st Quarter 2024

The mysterious new grocery store in Crystal City sure looks like an Amazon Fresh store

Is Amazon building a flagship grocery store near HQ2? Based on photos showing the inside of the under-construction store, it sure looks like it. Nothing has been announced, and both Amazon and building owner JBG Smith have been tight-lipped about the thus-far-unnamed grocery store that's coming to 1550 Crystal Drive, though rumors have swirled throughout the year that Amazon is behind the store. No confirmation yet. [But read more here.](#)

County pushes for more greenery, accessibility in Amazon HQ2 Phase 2 designs

The second SPRC took place virtually December 7. County commissioners welcome Amazon's latest revisions to plans for the second phase of its HQ2 in Pentagon City — but are pushing for more greenery and accessibility. Designs for Phase 2, also known as PenPlace, are wending through Arlington County's planning review process. Phase 2 will be anchored by a lush, futuristic building,

dubbed “The Helix,” and feature three, 22-story office buildings, three retail pavilions, a childcare center, a permanent home for Arlington Community High School, 2.5 acres of public green space, multi-modal pathways and underground parking. Amazon is massaging out the details with county staff, commissioners and community representatives to ready the plans for Planning Commission and County Board review, possibly in the spring. The tech giant has already updated the three office buildings, pathways and green spaces in response to requests for more architectural diversity and plantings. A variety of other suggestions were made. [See the ArlNow.com article.](#)

Route 1

Timewise, we are in Phase 2 when VDOT is supposed to conduct a number of studies related to their ongoing study of Route 1. Many of these studies were urged by the Livability22202 Route 1 working group and others. We hope to organize an update session January 19 at our next CCCA meeting with a VDOT update and a panel of residents reacting. In the meantime, the Commonwealth Transportation Board, a panel that manages state transportation funding and policy, voted unanimously December 1 to allocate \$134.4 million to fund the highway’s overhaul through 2028. The project, designed to bring at least some portion of the newly renamed Richmond Highway down to grade and make it more friendly to pedestrians, has a total estimated price tag of roughly \$180 million, but only if VDOT’s proposed option of bringing Route 1 down to grade at 15th and 18th Streets is enacted.

Pentagon City PDSP Study

The planning study will update long-term goals for Pentagon City, establish parameters for future growth, and identify criteria to help review future redevelopment applications. [Draft 3](#) was published November 24. The accompanying staff report that has gone out to the Planning Commission can also be found [here](#). [Pentagon City Planning Study: Documents - Projects & Planning \(arlingtonva.us\)](#). The plan was presented at County commission and board meetings in December and public meetings will be held soon. Final comments were due December 31. The 4th draft version of the Pentagon City Sector Plan is anticipated to be released in the second half of January and will accompany the staff report for the February public hearings.

SPRC #2 for PenPlace (Amazon HQ2)

A virtual Site Plan Review Committee meeting for [PenPlace](#) (Amazon HQ2) was held on December 6. The latest proposal received largely positive reviews from Arlington County and civic leaders who say the company’s design has incorporated public feedback. While the committee’s members voiced general agreement with much of the PenPlace design — including pedestrian access to Army-Navy Drive, green roofs on the office buildings, bird-proofing of the buildings, details of their façades and a priority on sustainability — many did agree on one key area for improvement: the need for even more trees and native plants on the site. In addition, committee members sought a higher priority for accessibility, offering suggestions to adjust the current proposed stairway on Army-Navy Drive. They also urged the company to work with county’s staffers who specializes in public art when creating the murals set to adorn the garage entrances. CCCA rep Judy Freshman reiterated concerns over the unimaginative rooftops that are not going to contribute anything to the skyline, a frequent issue that’s resurfaced in previous review meetings for the PenPlace design.

The Federal Aviation Administration has no issue with the height of Amazon.com Inc.'s proposed Helix, the towering conical structure that will be a major part of HQ2's PenPlace phase, closing the

book on questions raised by the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority. The federal agency's review process required a monthslong aeronautical study, which concluded that the planned building, which rises 355 feet above ground level, "would not be a hazard to air navigation," despite its close proximity to Reagan National Airport. That's as long as it includes red lighting, according to a letter that the FAA sent Nov. 26 to Amazon's PenPlace design team.

The next step in the SPRC process is another meeting scheduled for **Jan. 24**, before Amazon can pass along its proposal to the Planning Commission and the Arlington County Board, steps projected for March. The SPRC will focus on transportation, sustainability, and construction/phasing. Following county approval, PenPlace is expected to open by 2026.

CC2DCA Study Update and Engagement Available

The Crystal City to Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport ([CC2DCA](#)) Multimodal Connector study is seeking your input, and a new public engagement opportunity is open now through January 9, 2022. The feedback you provide will be used to further direct the study as we work to achieve the milestones outlined in the NEPA process. [This pre-recorded video presentation](#) provides information about the purpose and need of the project, how it was developed including stakeholder input from this summer, and how it was used to screen potential corridors and preliminary concepts for a multimodal connection between the airport and Crystal City. The complete set of project materials for this engagement is available here. Once you've reviewed the materials, you can share your feedback:

- Complete the [online feedback form](#)
- Submit your input via email to <mailto:info@cc2dca.us>

All public comments must be received on or before **January 9, 2022**. To learn more about the study, visit [the project page](#)

Potential Big District Change for Crystal City

In December, the Supreme Court of Virginia unveiled draft maps for the Virginia House of Delegates, the Virginia Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives. The maps were drawn up by one Democrat and one Republican appointed by the court, after a non-partisan committee failed to complete the task earlier in the year. The maps propose an entirely new House district that essentially encompasses Arlington's Metro corridors, including Rosslyn, Courthouse, Clarendon, Virginia Square, Ballston, Crystal City and parts of Pentagon City. Currently, those neighborhoods are either part of House District 49 (represented by Del. Alfonso Lopez), House District 48 (represented by Del. Rip Sullivan), or House District 47 (represented by Del. Patrick Hope). None of these incumbents reside in the proposed newly-created House District 2, a VPAP analysis says, meaning there's an empty seat that could be filled by a political newcomer. [Read more here.](#)

County, Amazon Partner to Preserve 1300+ Affordable Homes in Arlington

Arlington County and Amazon are making significant investments to help preserve more than 1,300 affordable apartment homes at the 60-acre Barcroft Apartment community for 99 years—one of the single largest affordable housing efforts ever in the region. At its Tuesday, Dec. 14, meeting, the County Board committed to a loan of \$150 million to support acquisition of the property. In addition, Amazon is committing \$160 million in a low-rate loan from the Amazon Housing Equity Fund to support the preservation. The County's and Amazon's funding will also support the developer in addressing immediate repairs, adding amenities, making property upgrades, and taking steps to improve residents' overall living environment. The County's commitment is the first public step in a

real estate deal that will be finalized later this month. The agreement ensures that the Barcroft property keeps its affordability for generations to come. After closing, residents currently living at Barcroft apartments will be assured they can continue to live in their homes and their rents will remain at the current rent levels for the first year. Future rents will be capped at no more than a 3% increase per year (up to 60% of the Area Median Income rent levels). [Read more here.](#)

Aurora Highlands property could become affordable housing for people with disabilities

Melwood, which connects people with disabilities with public- and private-sector jobs and opportunities, currently runs a workforce development site from the building at 750 23rd Street S., in the Aurora Highlands neighborhood. It envisions redeveloping the property into a 100% affordable, 104-unit building with about 30 units set aside for people with disabilities. The five-story building would also house workforce development services and community programming. Melwood took an early step forward by filing an application for a Special General Land Use Plan (GLUP) study this week. The application says the study is needed because the property falls outside of any adopted county sector plan documents. Melwood requests that the county change the land-use designation from “public” to “low-medium” residential uses so that the property can eventually be rezoned for apartments, [Read more here.](#) In December County staff received a “Tier 1” Special GLUP Study application for the Melwood site located on 23rd Street. Staff will evaluate potential LRPC meeting dates later in 2022 to consider public feedback and evaluate if that request should proceed to the “Tier 2” analysis (which is the actual Special GLUP Study).

Crystal City Restaurants

[Tacombi](#) opened at 1550 Crystal Drive on December 8. The long-awaited New York City-based taqueria chain is open 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.

ARLINGTON COUNTY ISSUES

Virginia Redistricting Changes our Congressional District

The Supreme Court of Virginia has unanimously approved new district maps for the House of Delegates, the State Senate, and the US House of Representatives. We are now District 2, encompassing all of 22202 and much of Arlington to the north. you can read [the memo from the Special Masters](#) and [check out the maps](#) for yourself.

County Board Organizational Meeting & Meeting with the Arlington Civic Federation

The Board will meet on Monday January 3, 2022, at 6:00pm, or as soon thereafter as matters may be heard, at 2100 Clarendon Boulevard #307 for its Annual Organizational Meeting and will consider the following matters: election of 2022 Chairman and Vice Chairman; adoption of the 2022 Meeting Schedule, 2022 Meeting Procedures, including Annual Budget & Tax Rate(s) Hearings Procedures, and Tie Breaker Resolution; appointments to regional bodies and other groups; Chairman’s Address; and remarks by Board Members. The County Board will also participate in a question and answer forum with the Arlington Civic Federation on Monday January 3, 2022 at 7:30pm, or as soon thereafter as matters may be heard, at 2100 Clarendon Boulevard #307, Arlington Va 22201. Both

meetings are open to the public in-person and [via live stream on the County's website](#) or broadcast on Arlington TV on Comcast Xfinity 25 or 1085(HD) and Verizon FiOS 39 & 40.

New Hours for Aurora Hills Library 2022

Monday: 10 a.m. - 8 p.m.

Tuesday: 12 p.m. - 8 p.m.

Wednesday, Thursday: 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Friday – Saturday: 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Sunday: Closed

County Fair to Remain at TJ

The 2022 Arlington County Fair will be held at Thomas Jefferson Community Center and Park (TJ). Contributing factors for the site selection include that the community has enjoyed the fair at TJ for 45 years, 60% of the nearly 1,600 respondents of the site location public engagement preferred keeping the Fair at TJ and further review of the Long Bridge Park location indicated that it would not be able to accommodate the number and variety of rides the County Fair Board desires. Should you have any questions regarding the Fair site location, email the Arlington County Fair Board at <mailto:info@arlingtoncountyfair.us>.

Debut of Long Bridge aquatics center makes waves among county swim classes

In July, Arlington Public Schools launched the APS Aquatics School for students and residents, while the county opened the Long Bridge Aquatics & Fitness Center in August. APS's new program prompted the county's Department of Parks and Recreation to relocate most of its classes from local public high schools to the new facility near Crystal City. Since September, Long Bridge has been home to all county classes — save youth swim team practices — which officials say centralizes the county's program and serves more people. [Read more here.](#)

Free COVID-19 Tests Available at the Library

In collaboration with the Virginia Department of Health (VDH), all Arlington Public Library locations will distribute free COVID-19 rapid antigen at-home test kits beginning Friday, Dec. 10, 2021. The test kits are available on a first-come, first-served basis and can be picked up from the service desk at each Library location. Neither proof of County residency nor a library card is required, and the kits are free of charge. Visitors are welcome to pick up test kits for both themselves and household members. Masks are required in all Library buildings - including when picking up a test. Anyone exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms should have someone pick up the test on their behalf. While the supply of test kits is currently limited, it will be replenished regularly. Please visit the Library to check availability.

New Bag Tax

The Arlington County Board voted unanimously to adopt a 5-cent tax on disposable plastic shopping bags during its September 2021 meeting. Approval aligns with the County's environmental goals to reduce pollution and protect natural landscapes and comes as the City of Alexandria and Fairfax County make the same commitment to reduce plastic bag waste. The tax will take effect in all three jurisdictions on **Jan. 1, 2022**. [Read more here.](#)

Rail work at Potomac Yard Metro station nearly complete as project rolls ahead

The Potomac Yard Metro station — originally scheduled to open in April — is now scheduled to open next September. [Read more here.](#)

Readying for Winter

Despite predictions for another below-average snowfall this winter, the County can't stray from a solid-if-not-frozen annual strategy: Prepare for whatever nature may drop. Commuters can take comfort knowing a big County response of almost 50 trucks — plus additional contractors — can roll in case forecasters are wrong at any point in coming months. [Read here](#) for how to prepare and follow County information. Stay connected through the County's [Snow and Ice](#) page and DES social media platforms for updates on snow phases, transportation, trash and other important notifications. Follow @ArlingtonDES on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

Aircraft Noise Mitigation Study Community Meeting #3

The third community meeting for the Arlington County / Montgomery County joint Aircraft Noise Mitigation Study for communities north of Reagan National Airport (DCA) was held virtually via [Facebook LIVE](#) 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 and [review the presentation](#).

Arlington Babe Ruth Baseball

Arlington Babe Ruth Baseball already is looking forward to spring and running the bases. Registration is open now for spring teams. We welcome back our youngest players with free T-Ball and Blastball registration again this season. Please consider passing this along to families in your community newsletters. Last year's fees continue through December 31. Prices go up January 1. The deadline to register is February 12. Teams begin forming in January and practices begin in early/mid-March. Let's get out and PLAY BALL! Registration is open now for girls and boys ages 4-12 and at all skill levels through the ABR website <http://www.arlingtonbaberuth.com/> Register by December 31 for the same fees as last year and no later than Feb. 12. Teams will begin forming in January. Practices will begin in early/mid-March.

OTHER ISSUES

Final Transportation Blog from Chris Slatt

This is his final ARLNow Modern Mobility column, as all of the opinion pieces are being phased out by ARLNow. [Modern Mobility: Looking back and looking forward | ARLnow.com](#) The good news is that old one - and new ones - will be on his blog: <https://chrisslatt.com/blog/>

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1300 Crystal Drive #408S

Arlington, VA 22202