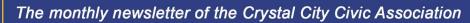
# **CRYSTAL CITY INSIDER**





**March 2025** 

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#### PRESIDENT'S CORNER

At our March 19 meeting, we will host General Assembly Delegate Adele McClure to talk about the current session. She has had many bills passed, and we are excited to hear about them!

In addition, we will have a video from Arlington County on EVERY transportation project in our area. This is a comprehensive review of every project, including the CC2DCA bridge.

The meeting begins at 7 p.m. at our usual location, 251 18th St. To register for Zoom, the link is here.

- Eric Cassel, CCCA President

### Renew your CCCA Membership for 2025

CCCA dues of \$10 are on an annual basis, Jan. 1-Dec. 31. You can renew your membership online via PayPal or by check to our Treasurer (see last page of the newsletter). Although our sister civic associations in 22202 charge \$20 or more for annual dues, we have not increased ours since the CCCA was established in January 2014.

#### INFORMATION AND EVENTS – ARLINGTON COUNTY

#### County responds to CCCA questions on Commuter Store, library

The CCCA hosted the new county board chair, Takis Karantonis, at our January meeting. We gave him homework. Here are the responses we have received from his office so far:

#### Commuter store:

It will close at the end of its lease on April 15. The county is considering on-street locations to park a mobile Commuter Store five days a week. The <u>Commuter Direct</u> website sells fares and passes that can be mailed directly to customers.



#### Long Bridge Drive intersection at Aquatic Center:

The county is collaborating with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) staff to install additional signs and pavement markings to reduce confusion for motorists. Further studies will then be conducted to assess the effectiveness of the measures and determine if additional modifications are necessary. Until then, cars from the aquatic center heading toward Crystal City should turn right and use the traffic circle to head southwest on Long Bridge Drive. Left turns from the parking lot are restricted for safety reasons.

#### Status of the Crystal City library:

The county manager reported at a recent County Board meeting that funds have been set aside for the library. County staff is exploring opportunities and developing site plans. As of now, there is no location or timeline.

#### Responsibility for the CC2DCA:

Arlington County will be oversea structural maintenance of the pedestrian/bicycle bridge to the airport. Roles and responsibilities regarding aesthetic maintenance and user experience have yet to be determined.

#### Traffic light at 26th and Crystal Drive:

The timing of the light was decided in the <u>Crystal City-Potomac Yard Transitway Project</u>. The Transitway runs with the pedestrian phase, allowing for six-minute headways between buses and providing added protection to walkers.

#### Pedestrian safety on Crystal Drive between 15th and 18th streets

Future modifications to the corridor between 15<sup>th</sup> Street S. and 18<sup>th</sup> Street S. are included in the <u>Crystal City Bike Network Plan</u>, but include no major changes. If you have specific transportation safety concerns, report them with the county's <u>Report a Problem</u> tool.

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#### Extending 10th street under Route 1:

VDOT's Route 1 Multimodal Improvements Study, Phase 2, proposes an underpass that would create space for a potential future extension of 10<sup>th</sup> Street S between Army Navy Drive and Long Bridge Drive. As this concept had never previously been considered, it is not included in the county's planning documents. The fate of the extension hinges on further coordination, planning, and study between VDOT and the county.

### Cap set on next property tax increase

The average tax bill will increase no more than \$400 this year. That figure is based on the average home value of \$855,000. The tax hike ceiling results from the County Board's decision last month to advertise a real estate tax rate of \$1.043 per \$100 of assessed value, a 1-cent increase from calendar year 2024. By law, the advertised rate is the maximum allowed.

"The advertisement of a 1-cent tax rate increase does not mean there will in fact be an adoption of an increase," said Takis Karantonis, the board's chair. "This provides the Board with some flexibility during the Budget Process, as we monitor the impending impacts of the current administration and Congress' decisions that will disproportionally impact our regional economy."

The board will hold a public hearing on the budget on March 25 and one on the tax rate on March 27. To speak at the hearings, sign up <u>here</u>, at least five days in advance. The final vote will be in April. For more on the fiscal year 2025 budget, visit <u>here</u>.

#### Post office to move several blocks down Crystal Drive

The current United States Postal Service office inside the Crystal City Shops at 2180 Crystal Drive is moving a few blocks away to the ground floor of the Quimby on 23rd apartments. Dates for the move have yet to be announced. The new post office, located at 320 23rd Street S., will offer mailing and shipping services, stamp sales, and P.O. box rentals, a USPS representative told ARLnow. Another post office nearby at 1301 S. Fern Street in Pentagon City is expected to remain open.

# As federal workers rally, county girds for job, grant losses

More than 200 federal workers and contractors attended a standing-room-only meeting at the Central Library on Feb. 25 to discuss how the government job cuts are affecting Arlington residents. The county's proposed budget increases reserves from \$21.5 million to \$33 million as a cushion against schools losing federal funding or federal job cuts reducing commercial real estate tax revenue. This measure would act as a buffer if, for instance, Arlington Public Schools were to lose some or all of its federal funding or if reductions in federal jobs were to bring losses in commercial tax revenue.

The Arlington County Democratic Committee, which hosted last month's event, plans another workers' forum and possibly one on immigration, according to a report in <u>ARLnow</u>.

### County reasserts commitment to climate action

Arlington County has reaffirmed its commitment to battle climate change. The County Board adopted a <u>Climate Action Resolution</u>, which calls for a "whole-of-community" and "whole-of-government" approach to climate-related policies and operations. The plan sets three main goals:

- Developing and implementing an energy and environmental strategy encompassing both governmental operations and the broader Arlington community.
- Promoting collective action to ensure a safe, livable, and adaptable environment for all who live, work, and visit Arlington.
- Adhering to sustainability goals as the county draws up its operating budget.

### Charge up your car while you energize your mind at Central Library



Electric Vehicle chargers at Central Library are now online and fully operational. Visit the county's <u>EV website</u> for more on public charging sites and their rates throughout Arlington.

# App promotes practical ways to go green

The <u>GetGreen Arlington mobile app</u>, sponsored by Arlington County in partnership with EcoAction Arlington, offers practical advice on fighting climate change. The app offers:

- Tailored climate actions for Arlington residents
- Eco-Tips and resources
- ← Green transportation options

Download on Google Play or the Apple App Store.

### Looking to dispose of unsafe stuff? Here's your chance

It's time to round up those old paint cans and batteries. The Arlington Environmental Collection and Recycling Event (E-CARE) holds its biannual environmentally friendly drop-off event on March 15, 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m. at Wakefield High School, 1325 S. Dinwiddie St. Residents can safely dispose of old electronics and household hazardous materials, including paint products (25-can limit), old electronics/batteries, garden chemicals, fire extinguishers, household cleaners, petroleum products, flammable solvents, automotive fluids, and small metal items.

Sorry, but you will not be able to donate bicycles, medium-to-large appliances, and appliances containing refrigerants, such as dehumidifiers and wine fridges. For more information, visit <a href="here">here</a> or call 703-228-5000.

### County training volunteers in emergency response



Applications are now open for the spring training course to become an Arlington Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) volunteer. Training includes disaster preparedness, triage, first aid, fire suppression, disaster psychology, and terrorism awareness. After completing the course, volunteers receive a CERT ID badge, safety vest, backpack, and Tshirt. They will receive a bimonthly newsletter with training and non-emergency volunteer opportunities. In case of a major local emergency, CERT volunteers will be called on to help. The spring class runs Tuesdays and Saturdays, March 18-April 12. Visit here for more information.

# You'll find more than books at library's annual sale

Friends of the Arlington Public Library and Arlington Public Library are holding their semi-annual book sale April 3–6. In addition to a wide selection of books, games and puzzles will be available. Teachers and librarians receive 50 percent off book purchases on Friday and Saturday. Sunday is half-price day for all. All proceeds benefit programming at the library. Visit here for hours and more information.

# Arlington keeps track of its most vulnerable residents live

Arlington County released the <u>Community Vulnerability Index Map</u> (CVIM), a new tool to help identify concentrations of vulnerable populations in Arlington. The map ranks census tracts from the highest to the lowest concentrations of vulnerable populations. To click on different sections of the county, visit <u>here</u>. The following variables were used to determine vulnerability:

- Persons of color
- Persons under the age of 18

- Persons over the age of 65
- Lower-income households
- Low-income persons
- Low educational attainment
- Persons born outside of the United States

### County may drop Long Bridge from early voting sites for primary

The Arlington Electoral Board believes three, rather than four, early-voting locations should be enough for <u>June's primary election</u>. Board members voted 3-0 last month to ask County Board members to drop Long Bridge Aquatics & Fitness Center from the list of early-voting sites for the primary. Long Bridge was used for last year's presidential election.

### Slippery sidewalks, winter warnings? This site's for you

So it's clear we're not going to escape snow for another winter. The county offers a variety of ways to keep up with the forecast and the aftermath:

- Visit <u>Snow Removal Status</u> for progress removing ice and slush off roads, schools, and designated county trails and property.
- Sign up for Arlington Alert to get the latest weather alerts.
- Learn how you can take care of yourselves & others in cold weather.

#### **DEVELOPMENT**

#### Hard times for JBG Smith could affect us all

The largest landlord in Crystal City, JBG Smith (JBGS), is in a financial crunch, which in turn could have ramifications for the community at large.

The company reported last month that net operating income for the same properties fell by 6.5 percent in the fourth quarter of last year from the quarter before. The decline in commercial real estate taxes paid by JBG Smith and other landlords helps explain why the county manager's proposed budget includes raising the meal tax by one percentage point. In addition, the effort JBGS is willing to undertake to help the community is going to drop – not good news for fans of the Underground.

Another troubling sign is that many people who have served as the CCCA's contacts at the company have left, notably public affairs VP Jay Corbalis and chief development officer Kai Reynolds. Among others who have departed within the past year are Amy Rice, senior vice president of retail leasing, who has formed her own retail consultancy; Lauren Greco, vice president of retail leasing, who left for Papadopoulos Properties; and Jackie Sammarco, senior associate of retail leasing, who is now senior manager at AvalonBay Communities.

JBG Smith faces the impending challenge of the end of the large Amazon lease at 1770 Crystal Drive this summer. If it does not find a new tenant, income could take a 10 percent hit.

Further, any gains JBGS and other landlords see from the back-to-the-office mandate for federal employees could be more than offset by the ax the Trump administration is taking to the government. JBGS is far from bankrupt but is clearly feeling the heat of lower office demand.

# No, the Underground is not always open

JBG Smith representatives told the newsletter last month that as far as they were aware the Underground was open and maintained around the clock. After we forwarded reader reaction to the story, they acknowledged that indeed parts of the Underground are closed at certain times. We have requested a map showing when and where the Underground may be closed off. JBGS told us as of the end of last month they were still preparing it. Here are several reader responses:

- "From what I have witnessed, the men's restrooms in the area near the Metro entrance are either locked or in terrible condition and not being cleaned. Since this area is still a key passageway for Metro and VRE commuters, JBG should provide some decent maintenance of these facilities."
- "I was very surprised to discover that the doors to the Underground were locked coming from the Metro on Monday, January 20, at about 9:30 p.m. It was a frigid night, and my car was parked in the garage under 1770 Crystal Drive. I had to go up to street level and walk down 18th Street to use the car ramp to get into the garage and get my car. It was also my understanding that the doors were supposed to be open at all times, but of course, JBG just continues to do whatever they want, without impunity, and the county continues to take them at their word."



The five-story building is planned for 750 23rd St. S.

### **Controversial Melwood project clears County Board**

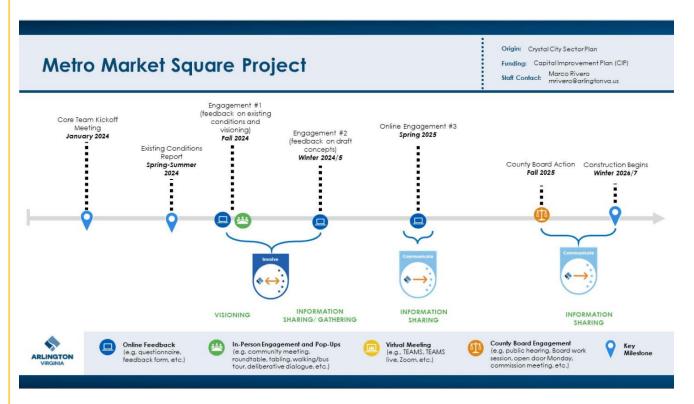
The controversial mix-used Melwood project was approved by the County Board last month. Melwood and Wesley Housing plan to build a five-story building with 105 committed-affordable units and ground-floor institutional space for occupational and educational training for people with disabilities. An underground garage will contain 94 parking spaces.

The Aurora Highlands Civic Association has expressed concerns about the height and mass of the building, which is planned for 750 23<sup>rd</sup> St. S. Dozens of opponents appeared at the board meeting, according to <u>ARLnow</u>.

The project could still be delayed by a year or more as the existing structure, a century-old school, goes through the <u>historic review process</u>.

# Marriott sees May opening for renovated hotel

The former Marriott Crystal City at Reagan National Airport is on track to open in May after being entirely renovated and rechristened National Landing Hotel Crystal City. The hotel, which is at 1999 Richmond Highway, will feature European-inspired cuisine, a 24/7 fitness center, and 8,500 square feet of event space. It is part of the Marriott Bonvoy portfolio. (ArlNow.com)



### Community weighs in on design of Metro Market Square

Over a month last fall, county staff surveyed existing conditions at the site of Metro Market Square and gathered community comments on how it should be developed. The project area is framed by Crystal Square to the north, 18th Street South to the south, Crystal Drive to the east, and South Bell Street to the west. A <u>summary</u> of ideas for improving the area include:

- Enhancing pedestrian safety with strict enforcement of traffic signals
- Light up the park and provide access to JBG Smith-owned plazas
- More trees, native plants, pollinators, and other wildlife support
- Encourage use of space for gatherings and conversations
- Make it part of an interlinking network of open spaces
- Discourage loud programming
- Moveable seating with back support
- Moveable umbrellas for summer shade

For raw data on feedback, visit here.

#### **TRANSPORTATION**

# Work begins on extending Transitway to Pentagon City Metro

Construction will begin early this month on 12th Street South as part of segment 2A of the <u>Transitway Extension to Pentagon City</u>. Work is expected to last through mid-2026.

<u>Crystal City Potomac Yard Transitway</u>, a dedicated bus corridor, currently runs from Braddock Road Metro in Alexandria to Crystal City. The 1.1 mile extension project connects it to the Pentagon City Metro via 12 Street S.

Here is what will happen to 12th Street S (visit <u>here</u> for a video):

- The median area will be turned into bus-only lanes
- Two new median Transitway stations will be constructed for future bus service
- All sidewalk ramps along the corridor will be improved to meet ADA compliance
- Signals and utilities will be upgraded

Before construction begins, crews will install signage and fencing. Additional notices will be posted when parking is restricted.



Construction will interrupt through traffic here.

During construction, the section of 12th Street South between South Fern Street and South Eads Street will be closed to vehicles, but sidewalk and garage access to businesses and residences will remain open.

Segment 1 on Crystal Drive was completed in fall of 2023, with the inclusion of curb reconstruction and transit shelters for planned bus service. The final segment, 2B, will be built in conjunction with the future WMATA's bus bay project on Army Navy Drive.

For more on the project, visit here.

# Airport parking reduced during construction of new garage

To add parking, the airport says it needs to take some away first.

Starting last month, Reagan National Airport closed off 850 of the 2,680 spaces in its economy parking lot. As part of the construction of a parking garage, which will continue into next year, up to 1,100 spaces will be displaced.

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"We don't have information yet on how the new spaces will be allocated, once completed," an MWAA spokesperson told <u>ARLnow</u>. "It is expected to include a mix of different airport uses, including customer parking."

The airport is also building a consolidated rental car facility.

Meanwhile, the Fashion Centre at Pentagon City is advertising its parking spots to travelers. The garage, 850 Army Navy Drive, is a short walk to the Pentagon City Metro station. Park-and-ride spots are available for \$15 per day with online payment.

Economy parking at DCA is \$19 per day, although the rate will increase to \$25 on March 3. Rates for parking at airport garages 1 and 2 — which are closer to the terminal — will also increase, from \$29 to \$35 per day. Online bookings may be discounted as much as 25 percent compared with drive-up parking rates.

### Beyer raises noise concerns in wake of airport changes

With tighter regulation of airline and copter flights around Reagan National Airport, Arlington's congressman wants to protect residential areas from more aircraft noise. Following last month's <u>fatal midair collision</u> between a military helicopter and a commercial jet, the Federal Aviation Administration has announced <u>new guardrails</u> on flights around the airport. A spokesperson for U.S. Rep. Don Beyer told <u>ARLnow</u> that Beyer supports the new safety measures but is working to keep helicopter flights away from where people live.

# Sewer work to disrupt traffic on part of South Clark Street

Expect the possibility of lane closures on South Clark Street from 12<sup>th</sup> Street S to 14<sup>th</sup> Street S over the next month as contractors replace and upgrade sanitary sewer pipe. The work will take place on weekdays between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. Pedestrians will encounter dust and noise; drivers will navigate among flaggers. If you have questions, contact the Water and Sewer Control Center at 703-228-5000.

#### **PARKS & RECREATION**

### **Expand your mind, exercise your body**



Registration begins this month for ENJOY Arlington programs, including classes, aquatics, nature, and history. The catalog is available in PDF and flipbook versions. Sign-up starts noon March 11. For more information, visit the Enjoy Arlington classes webpage. Offerings are sponsored by Arlington Parks & Recreation.

### **Boat launch slated to open in June at Four Mile Run Park**

It's not Arlington, but it is close to us. We pass Four Mile Run Park as we drive down Glebe Road, Arlington Ridge Road, or Mt. Vernon Avenue. A canoe and kayak launch will make Four Mile Run and the Potomac River accessible to paddlers of all abilities. The Four Mile Run Conservatory Foundation has been contracted to build it between March and June this year. For details, visit <a href="here">here</a>.

### DOINGS IN CRYSTAL CITY (AND NEARBY)

### **Encore Learning offers courses, clubs, events – indoors and out**

Encore Learning's Spring 2025 lineup offers 36 courses in such areas as literature, history, science, current events, and the arts.

Enhance your understanding of ballet, engage with nature in "Introduction to Spring Birding," or delve into personal development in "Understanding Happiness in Our Encore Years." Gain insights from



Encore Learning's Kayak Club.

former ambassadors in "Global Hot Spots" or reflect on "Democracy in America Now."

Encore Learning, a nonprofit organization, offers course, clubs, and special events to anyone over 50. For more details and to register, visit <a href="http://www.encorelearning.net">http://www.encorelearning.net</a>.

The course catalog is available online at www.encorelearning.net, with printed copies available at local libraries and senior centers.

Courses are offered during the day, both virtually and in person, with most in-person sessions held in classrooms at George Mason University's Mason Square in Arlington.

# Wondering where to walk or cycle? Download a map

The county is offering detailed brochures for pedestrians and walkers: the BikeArlington <u>Bicycle Comfort Level Map</u> and WalkArlington's <u>Walkabout Maps</u>, which features 22 self-guided walks around the County.

# For more activities, visit ...

- Events at National Landing
- Arlington Parks and Recreation
- Arlington arts events
- Arlington Convention and Visitors Services

### **DINING IN CRYSTAL CITY (AND NEARBY)**

### New eateries opening at Pentagon City mall in coming months

The Pentagon City mall has confirmed the planned opening dates for some of its <u>new eateries</u>. Gelato, Mediterranean food, Guatemalan chicken, and more are expected to come to the Fashion Centre at Pentagon City over the next few weeks and months.

Amorino Gelato al Naturale serves many flavors of gelato and sorbet in rose petal shapes, while placing an emphasis on preservative-free ingredients. It will open on the mall's Metro level, near the food court. "Guests can mix and match flavors, enjoy a gelato-filled macaron or sip on refreshing milkshakes and sorbet drinks," a news release reads. Opening this month if not already.

Mezeh Mediterranean Grill offers bowls, wraps, and salads with fresh ingredients and Mediterranean-inspired flavors. The eatery caters to vegan, gluten-free and keto diets, and is expected to open in April in the Metro-level entrance hallway. This will be Mezeh's fourth Arlington location, joining outposts in Ballston and Crystal City and at Reagan National Airport.

<u>Pollo Campero</u>, a Guatemalan fast-casual restaurant, offers chicken nuggets, piece meals, sandwiches, empanadas, bowls, and salads. It is expected to open next month between Health Pub and Popeyes. "From hand-breaded to citrus-grilled, Pollo Campero's perfectly seasoned chicken options bring a burst of flavor in every bite," its news release reads.

Kati Roll Wala, another fast-casual option, "offers a fresh, exciting option for anyone craving bold Indian-inspired flavors." Customers can order custom bowls topped with chicken tikka or spiced potatoes. Kati Roll Wala looks to open later in spring where acai bowl and smoothie place Health Pub is currently open. The mall hopes to relocate Health Pub after the opening, a representative told ARLnow.

<u>Tous les Jours</u>, a French-Asian bakery and café, has yet to set an opening date. Its signage has appeared where <u>Maizal closed</u> this summer. The bakery has a location nearby at the Ballston Quarter, offering croissants, colorful macarons, cakes, and cafe drinks.

# Founding Farmers to open Oakville Triangle location next month

The <u>Founding Farmers location</u> in the new <u>Oakville Triangle</u> development project is scheduled to open next month. The opening is scheduled for some time in mid-March at 461 Swann Avenue. The restaurant features an American-inspired <u>menu</u> with rotisserie chicken, fried chicken and waffles, and other dishes. (<u>AlxNow.com</u>)

# Asian fusion spot 'Pi BBQ and Bar' plans opening in Crystal City

An Asian fusion restaurant with Korean barbecue is set to open early this month in Crystal City. Pi BBQ and Bar will be located at 420 23rd Street S., near Restaurant Row. The previous Chinese restaurant Yung Chow shuttered in February 2023. (Arlnow.com)

### Tex-Mex restaurant La Posada to open in spring

A Tex-Mex and Latin-inspired restaurant hopes to open in Crystal City sometime early this spring. La Posada, a new concept by veteran restaurateur Julian Giraldo, is in development at 320 23rd Street S., on the ground floor of Quimby on 23rd apartments. Giraldo plans to serve Mexican comfort foods and "masterful creations enhanced with iconic items from other cuisines around Latin America." (Arlnow.com)

### Java Loco bubble tea cafe expands to Crystal City

A Northern Virginia cafe has opened a new location in Crystal City, offering espresso drinks, bubble tea and brunch. <u>Java Loco Coffee & Bubble Tea</u> opened Jan. 27 at 2777 Crystal Drive. The new location, featuring two new lunch options, is the business's fifth overall and first in Arlington. It serves bubble tea and Vietnamese coffee. (ARLnow)

### Filipino bakery Gwenie's Pastries plans Pentagon City opening

New dessert options with Filipino flair are coming soon to Pentagon City. With a lilac aesthetic and colorful delicacies, Maryland-based <u>Gwenie's Pastries</u> hopes to bring baked goods and hot beverages to 1417 S. Fern Street — formerly W Nails & Spa — by April. Gwenie's most popular cheesecakes, donuts, pies, and cakes use ube, a mildly sweet, nutty purple yam commonly used in Filipino cuisine.

#### **ABOUT CCCA**

The Crystal City Civic Association (CCCA) was formed on Jan. 28, 2014. We are a non-partisan, not-for-profit organization with the express purpose of advancing the common interests of the residents of the Crystal City neighborhood in Arlington County, Virginia. CCCA gives a voice to our residents. CCCA officers represent community members at County meetings, function as liaisons to state and local lawmakers, coordinate with the Crystal City BID on important issues and projects, and ensure the needs of residents are met.

#### CRYSTAL CITY CIVIC ASSOCIATION BOARD

**President** Eric Cassel

Vice President Tarsi Dunlop

**Meeting Secretary** Sheryl Eaton

**Communications Director** Andrew Damitio (by appointment)

Membership Liaison Matthew Fuzi

**Treasurer** Steve Miller

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Send a check for \$10 to:

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