

ARCA NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2021

Thursday, March 18, 7pm

VIA ZOOM

See details below

Please join us for the March virtual meeting, where we will have two guests from the neighborhood: Brooke Oberwetter, Amazon's Head of External Affairs who will update us on its development of HQ2 (and the exciting "Helix" building plan) and its role in the redevelopment of Crystal House as an apartment for affordable housing. Also joining us will be well-known local realtor Geva Lester, who can update us on the current conditions of the housing market (HOT, we hear).

AMAZON UNVEILS EXCITING DESIGN OF "HELIX" HQ2

If you've visited Amazon's Seattle headquarters, you may already be acquainted with [The Spheres](#), a special place where employees can work or unwind while immersed in nature. The Spheres were inspired by a concept called *biophilia*—the innate human desire to connect with nature—and a similarly engaging and rejuvenating concept is the basis for our Arlington headquarters: a double helix.

The natural beauty of a double helix can be seen throughout our world, from the geometry of our own DNA to the elemental form of galaxies, weather patterns, pinecones, and seashells. The Helix at our Arlington headquarters will offer a variety of alternative work environments for Amazon employees amidst lush gardens and flourishing trees native to the region. A true double helix in shape and structure, this unique building will feature two walkable paths of landscaped terrain that will spiral up the outside of the building, featuring plantings you may find on a hike in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia. And because innovative technology often derives from the intersection of art and science, we've planned an artist-in-residence program to be hosted within The Helix. Local artists, in collaboration with our employees, will be inspired by the nature within the building as they create their pieces. We plan to offer public tours of The Helix several weekends a month so everyone has the opportunity to enjoy this unique environment. A variety of inviting open spaces totaling more than 2.5 acres will be accessible for public use. An amphitheater facing a spacious central green will accommodate outdoor concerts, farmers' markets, and movies in the park. A forest grove will offer more shaded areas for relaxation on a hot day, a quiet place to talk with a friend, or to simply enjoy the natural setting.

Retail pavilions and restaurants will be conveniently located throughout the site. Our plans also include room for a childcare center, a dog run, and a food truck area with plentiful outdoor seating. And we will create a dedicated 20,000-square-foot community space that can support educational initiatives and be flexible enough to accommodate everything from large community meetings to small classes and individual use.

This project complements other ways we're promoting a sense of community at the nearby site of the [first phase of our Arlington headquarters \(Metropolitan Park\)](#), with our planned 2.8-acre park that includes abundant tree canopy coverings, neighborhood gathering areas, and places for dogs.

The publicly accessible spaces throughout the site will prioritize walkways, landscaping, and retail over motor vehicles. We plan to make a significant investment to move all vehicle access underground to foster a safe and welcoming pedestrian environment for everyone. Visitors and neighbors won't see service vehicles crossing the new site as all deliveries and docking activity will happen underground, freeing up even more space for the community. Additionally, there will be protected bike lanes in the streets and each office building will have dedicated street-level bike entrances and facilities to encourage safe and convenient bicycle commuting to our Arlington headquarters.

PenPlace (Amazon) Site Plan Community Kickoff March 25

Join the community meeting to learn more about what the site plan includes and how the review process will work. You will be able to share feedback on the Helix and more. <https://projects.arlingtonva.us/projects/pen-place-2021>

ROUTE #1 STUDY-- STATUS REPORT

As part of the Amazon HQ2 agreement, Virginia promised that it would study possible Route 1 improvements between 12th and 23rd Streets. VDOT, which is conducting the Study, confirmed at a recent meeting, that it is considering the feasibility of just the three options: (1) eliminating the bridges over 15th and 18th Streets while lowering the highway to grade; (2) retaining the bridges more or less as is; (3) retaining the bridges while converting the highway into an "urban boulevard" as recommended in the Crystal City Sector Plan. During its presentation, VDOT tentatively explained the enormous difficulty of lowering the highway to grade at 18th Street and described several concepts for altering the 15th Street intersection, each of which had drawbacks, particularly if the highway

could not be lowered at 18th Street. Thus, it's beginning to appear that, while the Study will not be finalized until early summer, VDOT may be starting to lean toward the third, "urban boulevard" option. Exactly what that would entail remains to be seen. Route 1 is the primary North-South artery through 22202 and any changes to this stretch of highway will have significant impacts on how people travel through and within our neighborhood. As part of our engagement on this issue, ARCA, along with Aurora Highlands and Crystal City Civic Associations sent a letter to our state representatives to make sure they are informed and engaged on any decisions on Route 1.

For more information, <https://livability22202.org/livability22202-meeting-with-vdot-on-route-1-feasibility-study/>

LIVABILITY

A NEW PERFORMANCE SPACE FOR ARTS GROUPS?

Pentagon City Planning Study Group Meeting

Mon. March 22, 6:30pm Zoom link

Arlington has a laudable history of support for the arts, winning a Ford Foundation/Kennedy School of Government award for its arts incubator. Once we had groups providing dance, music, opera, children's theatre, public art, chamber music, visual arts, media arts and many theaters, as well as heritage groups from across the globe. However, during the past several years the once vibrant art scene has lost 20 of its arts groups and several performance venues. The County says it will not invest in arts infrastructure like the theater promised as a community benefit for a development on Fairfax Drive.

So the advocacy group Embracing Arlington Arts has an ambitious infrastructure initiative in which it will work with stakeholders, arts patrons, organizations, and community leaders to build out a new venue in Pentagon City as we reinvent National Landing. Our neighbors in Alexandria, Fairfax and Falls Church are all planning new state-of-the-art performance theaters. It is essential we uphold our reputation for quality and keep pace with our neighbors; we should not be sending our residents to DC and Maryland for their entertainment and dining choices. There is great talent here, let's keep it. Come to the meeting on March 22 and help advocate for "ars longa, vita brevis".

ARLINGTON #2 FOR CHEAP DATES

According to the website SmartAsset which examines cities in the U.S. comparing the cost of things like coffee and wine, and even cheap dates. The study writes that one of the small upsides of COVID is that things may be cheaper than usual and a certain amount of innovation is required. In Arlington, they say, your date is "likely employed and has a decent disposable income

(unemployment was 3.8% in Nov. 2020). The rankings compared the cost of two cappuccinos, takeout, a bottle of wine and internet costs. #1 is Madison WI.

COVID 2020 TIME CAPSULE

When future Arlingtonians look back, what are some items that will tell the story of 2020? The Center for Local History at the Arlington Public Library is creating a time capsule, titled **2020 Unboxed**, that will contain objects representing life during the momentous year. Themes include the COVID-19 pandemic, racial justice and civic unrest, the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage and the 2020 Census.

It is "A snapshot of today and a gift for the future", says library director Diane Kresh. Residents are encouraged to donate objects that demonstrate how life was affected or altered during the year, submissions will be collected through September 2021. The collection will be exhibited online in October 2021, then sealed and stored for preservation and future research.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION MASTER PLAN (HPMP) UPDATE

"Give us Five": Take 5 minutes to watch a video and respond

<https://projects.arlingtonva.us/plans-studies/historic-master-plan-update/>

The HPMP update will include an analysis of historic preservation work in Arlington since its adoption, and robust community engagement is needed. "Historic preservation is change management. The effort is not to prevent all change, but to preserve the stories, traditions and other cultural elements that define and knit together a community", preservationists aver.

Please take some time to help this important work. The program is committed to protecting the histories of people of color, the LGBTQIA+ community, immigrants, women and all who have been historically overlooked. Understanding the past is key to this work.

CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL IN NATIONAL LANDING

March 20 – April 11

The National Cherry Blossom Festival is crossing the river into our neighborhood with lots of help from our neighbor Aurora Highlands Civic Association who will host events in Virginia Highlands Park! Dozens of cherry trees will be planted and two "Art in Bloom" sculptures and pop-up installations will be featured in the Crystal City Water Park. Other events include live music from a wide array of groups, kite flying, an interactive mural, a pet day and more. Local residents and businesses will take part in a "Porch Parade and Petal Procession", made possible by the National Landing BID and developer JBG Smith. One of our guests, Brooke Oberwetter, will fill us in with more details at the March ARCA meeting. <http://aurorahighlands.org/cherryblossom>

COUNTY APPROVES PARKING PERMIT CHANGES

The County Board approved the overhaul of the Residential Permit Parking Program (RPP) following its three year review. They rejected the proposed 2 hour paid parking to all zones, which generated pushback from many in ARCA. Other changes included reducing the number of permits per household, expanding the program to townhomes, condos, small apartment buildings in residential zones, increased permit prices to cover the cost of the program, and higher thresholds for eligibility petitions. Also permits for school employees has been included. For full details see <https://newsroom.arlingtonva.us/release/county-board-approves-revamped-residential-permit-parking-program/>

SUMMER CAMP WORKERS NEEDED

<https://parks.arlingtonva.us/wp-content/uploads/sites/17/2014/01/Application-Information-and-Instructions.pdf>

Want to have a fantastic summer? Arlington County is looking for creative, enthusiastic, committed, sincere people, aged 15+, who want to have fun to staff our summer camps. **These are part-time to full-time temporary positions at a competitive salary.** Great for teachers, college students and anyone who wants experience working with the best kids in the nation... Arlington kids! You can also support special interests in the arts, nature, gymnastics or working with people with disabilities.

The camps run from June 21 – Aug 27. Apply online.

NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION

17 YEAR CICADAS ARE ON THEIR WAY

Mar 26, 10am

<https://mgmv.org/event/preparing-your-garden-for-the-seventeen-year-cicadas-event-details>

Join the Zoom class for a discussion of the emergence of Brood X of the 17 year cicadas, who will emerge from their long underground life cycle between mid-May and late June. They will talk about their life cycle and how to protect your plants from them.

5 MILLION POUNDS OF GLASS!

Use of the drop-off glass sites continues to shatter the County's expectations, with 5 million pounds of glass (2,500 tons) collected since 2019. Arlington receives \$15 a ton, and the recycled glass is used for a variety of products.

PLOT AGAINST HUNGER SPRING GARDEN KICKOFF

March 13 – 20

Mar 20: Gardening Demonstrations at Central Library, 9:30am.

A weeklong event with online and outdoor events with seed giveaways, mini-classes, how to start a plot against hunger with advice from experts. Come on March 20 for live demonstrations of using trellises and raised beds.

FOOD SCRAPS COLLECTION NEXT YEAR?

Arlington is considering adding food scrap collection to its solid waste services for 2021-2. Residents could toss their food scraps into the green bin with the yard waste, with the new service charging \$12 annually. So far there has been positive community feedback, with 79% of respondents ready to go. The service would only be available to those in single family homes. Currently, residents can drop off their scraps at two locations. Arlington's trash audits reveal that food scraps make up more than 20% of what residents throw out; collecting food scraps would support the goal of diverting up to 90% of waste from incineration by 2038.

SCHOOLS

STUDENTS BACK IN THE CLASSROOM

Students in Pre-K through 2nd grade are filling the buses again, with roughly 75% of the student body opting in. Students and staff will complete a daily screening for COVID, working with health officials to ensure safety for all. 3rd – 5th grades will return next, and on March 16, 7th – 12th grades will follow back to the classroom. See the Return to School Update at <http://bit.ly/inside-arl-feb26>

AMAZON DONATES \$15,000 TO WAKEFIELD H.S.

Amazon continues its support for its new neighborhood with a generous donation of \$15,000 to Wakefield H.S. as part of its ongoing work to support education and racial equality initiatives in communities where its employees live and work. The donation includes the book *Stamped: Racism, Anti-Racism and You*, by Joshua Reynolds, which focuses on anti-racism, cultural awareness and proficiency. The funds will allow the school to invite guest speakers on the same topic.

GUNSTON STUDENTS ON TODAY SHOW

ARLnow.com reported that a number of Gunston Middle School students appeared on national TV when NBC's Today show interviewed former NASA astronaut Dr. Mae Jemison, the first Black woman to go into space. Questions on

what it was like in space, and breaking racial barriers were among those fielded by the students.

TRANSPORTATION

BLUE LINE CLOSED TILL MAY 23

Some of us who were not paying attention have been surprised by the long wait for the Blue line train at Pentagon City Metro. Now we know! It's been closed for weeks! So for those of you who are also similarly uninformed, the Blue Line is closed for platform reconstruction work, adding slip-resistant tiles, brighter LED canopy lighting (YEA!) and lighted handrails. Also added are platform shelters with charging ports, improved speakers (YEA! Again) and better information screens. Metro announced that ridership is down as much as 90%. Now we just have to work out how to get to Foggy Bottom.

ROLLING STOPS FOR BICYCLES? NOT YET, SAYS SENATE

A bill that would allow bicyclists in VA to treat stop signs as "yield" signs passed the VA House of Delegates, but has been sidelined by the Senate, which voted to commission a police study of the rule as enacted in other states. Safety for both bikers and cars was the issue; more anon.

APOCALYPTIC FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS?

Take the survey at <http://bit.ly/wmata-survey>

Metro is facing a significant budget shortfall for the upcoming year, and is working to secure additional funding for providing service during the pandemic. If they do not receive additional funding the service cuts they envisage would include closing up to 22 stations and operating Metrorail every 30 minutes on all lines, with service equal to 50% of pre-pandemic levels. Metro is anxious to increase awareness and encourage feedback from the public with signs in multiple languages and outreach teams at bus stops and stations. Take the survey to help keep Metro open.

CALENDAR

Thru. March 26th Simply Sondheim: A revue featuring over 30 songs from Stephen Sondheim's canon, including "The Worst Pies in London", "Losing My Mind" and "Another Hundred People", with a 16 piece orchestra and 12 singers. Streaming every day through March 26. \$35.

<https://www.sigtheatre.org/events/202021/simply-sondheim/>><https://www.sigtheatre.org/events/202021/simply-sondheim>

April 22 Laila Lalami in Conversation with Library Director Diane Kresh.

Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award winner Laila Lalami will discuss *Conditional Citizens: On Belonging in America*, recounting her journey from Morocco as an immigrant, an exploration of the rights, liberties and protections association with citizenship. <https://arlingtonva.libcal.com/event/7331623>

Thru May 6 Signature Vinyl: A sizzling tribute to the golden age of the turntable featuring the hits of Stevie Wonder, The Beatles, Carole King, Marvin Gaye, Joni Mitchell, Elton John and others. Filmed at several outdoor D.C area locations. <https://www.sigtheatre.org/events/202021/signature-vinyl>

SCHOOL BUDGET SHORTFALL

https://www.arlnow.com/2021/03/01/facing-42-5-million-budget-gap-aps-looks-to-biden-stimulus-package/?mc_cid=4d869ee7d2&mc_eid=87f6211765

VDOT ROUTE I PRESENTATION

https://www.arlnow.com/2021/03/01/making-room-route-1-bait-and-switch/?mc_cid=4d869ee7d2&mc_eid=87f6211765