



Livability 22202 Open Space Fact Sheet

“A commitment to livability means a focus on factors that promote ecological sustainability and human health and well-being.”

Livability22202 Action Plan, November 2019

What is the issue? Environmental sustainability and community building are at the core of a livable city. Enhancing these elements in 22202 will require strategically increasing the quality and quantity of open space to reduce heat intensity, improve stormwater management, incorporate solar energy, increase urban biodiversity and connect neighborhoods. Opportunities for land acquisition are few, so the solution hinges on finding access to land that is currently inaccessible, squeezing usable square footage out of “wasted space,” partnering with landowners for public use of private spaces, and, above all, promoting the evolution of existing parks to meet the needs of the present and future residents. Key components are a robust tree canopy and the incorporation of biophilic design in the built environment and in planned private and public spaces. Needs and opportunities abound for configuring open space and connectivity in 22202.

What have we done about it? In early 2020, neighbors participated in a series of discussions, including a community-run workshop on February 22, where some 65 community members and experts gathered to develop a comprehensive agenda organized around four topics:

- Connecting residents to the natural world and enhancing biodiversity throughout 22202
- Re-envisioning Virginia Highlands Park as the backyard for the Pentagon City community
- Developing a holistic approach to planning Crystal City Parks
- Exploring the possibility for a nature trail extending from Roaches Run Waterfowl Sanctuary through the wooded parcel along the George Washington Parkway to the southern end of Crystal City

What did we conclude? The principles identified reflect the need for holistic planning to strengthen connectivity, natural ecosystems, and community-building. Key recommendations emerged:

- Improve hostile pedestrian environments and develop walking/biking loops throughout 22202
- Promote connectivity of open spaces from Arlington Ridge to Crystal City and Long Bridge Park
- Connect Crystal City to the natural areas of Roaches Run on the east side of the railroad right of way
- Identify goals for natural systems: reduce heat island effects, mitigate stormwater impacts, provide wildlife habitat, incorporate solar energy
- Increase shade trees, plant natives, and use plantings to provide seasonal color and interest year-round

What’s happening now? The workshop report provides observations and recommendations for initiating a sustained collaboration with other stakeholders invested in the success of our community, including property developers, owners, county staff, and commission members. We continue to explore how to develop a network of green corridors and parks that will connect residents to nature and natural areas to each other. We focused on imagining casual use and event space at Virginia Highlands Park, created a naming map to show the possibilities of community-centric facilities in natural areas, and began a Highlands Urban Agriculture garden (HUG) as a pilot project. Our recommendations for Crystal City parallel those resulting from the BID and JBG-sponsored Crystal City Parks community engagement.