



December 14, 2023

Arlington County Board  
2100 Clarendon Boulevard  
Arlington, VA 22201

Re: Updated Livability22202 Priorities

Dear Members of the County Board:

Livability22202 is a coalition of the three civic associations of 22202 – Arlington Ridge, Aurora Highlands, and Crystal City – all of which face common pressures from rapid commercial and residential development. In 2018, community leaders, activists, and interested community members met to develop holistic strategies, based on shared themes, to create a better, more livable community. In 2019, the coalition published an Action Plan and Framework, which have been used by the County, developers, and even VDOT in their plans for the 22202 neighborhoods.

Fast forward to June 2023, County staff asked Livability22202 and the Crystal and Pentagon Cities Council (CPCC) for an updated list of community priorities to help focus development of the County's next Capital Improvement Plan. Using the 2019 Priorities as a starting point, the three civic associations held a series of meetings to ask the community to identify the most important priorities.

As a result, two major themes emerged as priorities for quality of life: Facilities and Open Space. The community is overwhelmingly concerned with the overcrowding of the neighborhood schools, and reports of declining academic achievement at neighborhood schools. Current and future students deserve high-quality schools that bring the community together, such as the addition of a centrally located and walkable elementary school. In addition, our community is seriously underserved by an outdated community center and library that are largely unchanged since the 1970s. The rapidly growing neighborhood needs a state-of-the-art community center that can offer a venue to support programs to enrich and unite our community such as an enhanced senior center, youth programs, performing space, meeting rooms, and more. Additionally, a new, centrally-located, modern library, complemented by the smaller library branch in Crystal City, is essential for the future of the community.

Throughout 22202, the community needs more green open space and less hardscape, while preserving and increasing tree canopy. Open Space and robust design and buildout of the Green Ribbon are high priorities. In addition to completing the park plans and

delivering parks that have already been promised, residents want to be assured that no open space is lost in the delivery of the essential county facilities. Open natural space and tree canopy are essential for the residents of 22202, and all county and private development projects should preserve or increase natural open space and tree canopy goals.

During this series of meetings in the fall of 2023, participants agreed upon the following set of priorities, but also brought up additional concerns and ideas for further exploration by Livability22202. For example, safety, security, multi-modal transit improvements, accessibility, airport and construction noise, parking, light pollution, and access and connection to neighboring open space all impact the community's quality of life. We will engage further with community members throughout 2024 to elaborate these concerns, identify possible solutions, and develop action plans.

#### Livability Priorities:

- **Elementary School** - The County must resolve the current overcrowding at Oakridge Elementary School and Gunston Middle School, and plan for the forecasted increase of the student population. Specifically, 22202 needs an additional elementary school that is centrally located and walkable.
- **Community Center** - The neighborhood needs a centrally located community center that meets the needs of current and future population. The center should retain the existing senior programs and community room and include additional amenities, to be further refined in community workshops.
- **Libraries** - The existing Aurora Hills library requires an update to modern functionality. A larger centrally located library is needed in addition to a smaller, separate library branch in Crystal City.
- **Planning, Design and Delivery of Open Space** - Throughout 22202, the community needs more green open space and less hardscape, while preserving and increasing tree canopy. The addition of new county facilities (school, community center, library) *should not decrease the net amount of open space*. Delivery of planned parks should not lag behind new building construction. Crystal City and Virginia Highlands Park planning should begin immediately to identify community needs and ensure they are met concurrent with development.
- **Green Ribbon** - The Green Ribbon is a continuous, ecologically-informed, connected pedestrian and bike network throughout 22202 that increases porosity through the superblocks. It connects the three neighborhoods of 22202, extends to Crystal City and to areas outside 22202. Landscape design should support the local ecosystem and more detailed design guidelines (and schedules) should be developed for the Green Ribbon through a community-driven process.

Livability Stakeholder Concerns:

- **Route 1** - The community strongly disagrees with the current plan to bring Route 1 to grade and considers it critical that the design options maintain the status quo at 18th Street South, or, alternatively, add a pedestrian underpass or Barnes Dance signalization.
- **Transportation Plan** - A comprehensive community-wide transportation plan is required across development projects and neighboring communities and jurisdictions, that considers traffic calming and other tools to ensure safety and robust multi-modal transit options across 22202. The traffic demand management (TDM) for Route 1 and other projects should be integrated into an overall 22202-wide TDM master plan. The new and proposed development happening nearby in Potomac Yard make this transportation plan even more necessary.
- **Crystal City Underground** – Revitalize the Underground as a community hub, both as a commuter route as well as new uses for the empty retail spaces.

*Note: Housing – Because of the extraordinary successes in delivering affordable housing units of all kinds the last few years, the community feels it is time to prioritize infrastructure needs for current and future residents. The community has an ongoing interest in helping existing and future residents remain in the neighborhood.*

We look forward to working with County leadership and staff as we advance our shared priorities for a more livable 22202.

Sincerely,



Kateri Garcia, President  
Arlington Ridge CA



Cory Jacobbe, President  
Aurora Highlands CA



Eric Cassel, President  
Crystal City CA

CC: Mr. Mark Schwartz, County Manager  
Arlington County School Board  
Dr. Francisco Durán, Superintendent of Schools  
Mr. Michael Dowell, Chair, Crystal and Pentagon Cities Council