

Donaldson Run Civic Association

March 28, 2025

Takis P. Karantonis, Chair
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

Re: Proposed Termination of NVCT Agreement

Dear Chair Karantonis and Board Members:

On behalf of the Executive Committee of the Donaldson Run Civic Association (DRCA), I am writing to urge that the Board reject staff's proposed termination of the County's 2022 Funding and Services Agreement with the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust (NVCT).

In that agreement, the County expressly recognized its "areas of common interest with NVCT in the development and implementation of environmental conservation and management plans, policies and practices, and in educating Arlington County residents and landowners on the importance and benefits of natural resource protection, habitat enhancement, watershed protection, land use planning, historic lands preservation, outdoor nature-based recreation, tree canopy protection, stormwater management, and environmental sustainability." Apparently in response to budget pressures, however, staff now proposes that the County exercise its right to terminate this agreement and all of these benefits, halfway through its current six-year term, in order to save \$86,900 during the upcoming fiscal year.

We urge the Board to reject this short-sighted proposal:

1. The Forestry & Natural Resources Plan, approved by the Board in December 2023, emphasizes the need to support and expand the capacity of partner organizations (4.3) so as to ensure "[a] robust network of partners" (4.5). And its implementation plan specifically identifies 11 Plan goals for which NVCT is a potential partner. Terminating this assistance for the remainder of the agreement raises serious questions about how the County will satisfy the implementation commitments reflected in the Plan.
2. As you know, the County now faces residential development trends that pose accelerating threats to dwindling mature tree canopy and stormwater management. In this challenging environment, NVCT makes important efforts to employ tax benefits and other effective tools to educate and incentivize private landholders to conserve our dwindling natural resources and habitats, most of which are located on private property. For example, NVCT has worked closely with DRCA members on Beechwood Circle for many years to acquire, preserve, and continue to manage the undeveloped land within the circle, with its extensive mature tree canopy.
3. The County now increasingly relies in Plan Langston Boulevard and elsewhere on "privately owned public spaces," instead of committing to more public investment in public goods such as parkland. This means that NVCT's efforts to create and maintain public spaces are even more critical. Another example in the DRCA neighborhood is the recent NVCT acquisition of a large part of the Terborgh property on 26th Street, which was part of a package that also included the family's contribution of adjacent land to the County.

4. By terminating the agreement, the County would forego its right to ensure that NVCT would continue to include at least three County residents on its board. NVCT's regional focus would therefore likely no longer sufficiently prioritize saving lands and natural resources within Arlington County.

For these and other reasons identified by NVCT, the many environmental benefits of the County's longtime relationship with NVCT far outweigh the minimal annual cost of the organization's services. We thus urge you to reject staff's proposed termination of the NVCT agreement as penny wise and pound foolish.

Thank you very much for your consideration of these views.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bill Richardson", with a stylized, flowing script.

Bill Richardson
President
Donaldson Run Civic Association