



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE DONALDSON RUN CIVIC ASSOCIATION

www.drca.org

October 2025

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Bill Richardson

Bill@drca.org

I hope all of you had a good summer, and are looking forward to a new school year. A lot is happening in and affecting our neighborhood, as the following articles describe.

Our next meeting will be on **Wednesday, October 1**. As usual, it will be at Taylor School, at 7:30 p.m. and begin with a social half-hour of light refreshments at 7:00.

For the first half of the program, we have arranged for Kensington Senior Living representatives to make a presentation and answer your questions about their proposal for a 7-story elder care facility next to Lebanese Taverna and across from the Lee Heights Shops. See the article on page 3 of this newsletter for more details. We are depending on your input to shape our participation on the upcoming site planning review committee later this fall.

After Kensington's presentation, we would like to provide reports and get your feedback on some of the other pending issues facing the Donaldson Run Civic Association (DRCA), including those described in this newsletter.

I would also like to discuss how we can maximize and diversify participation in DRCA's advocacy and neighborhood social events. We continue to look for volunteers to help, particularly younger and more diverse residents moving into the neigh-

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hood. Our two-year board terms expire next summer, and one way to help would be to share your new insights as a board member. Are there particular issues that concern you? Social events you would like to see us have? Ways of introducing those new to Donaldson Run? You don't need to be a board member to help.

Another way to do so is in updating our 2000 Neighborhood Conservation Plan (on our website) to reflect the new facilities and issues addressed in the recent survey of members we have put together. That Plan helps set forth our priorities and, after acceptance by the County, forms a way of documenting those priorities as we work together with County Board members and staff.

Please join us on **October 1**.

**The next Donaldson Run Civic Association meeting is at
Taylor Elementary School
Wednesday, October 1 at 7:30 p.m.**

MEMBERSHIP DUES

Kathy Rehill

Did you know that the Donaldson Run Civic Association (DRCA) is able to print this newsletter, maintain a webpage and email community updates thanks to voluntary membership dues and donations? Paying dues also enables you to be a member and vote on civic association business. Dues are \$20/household.

Check the mailing label on this newsletter to see if your dues are current. If you receive the newsletter electronically, email treasurer@drca.org for an update on your dues status. You can renew your dues by sending a check payable to DRCA along with the form on page 7 to Kathy Rehill, DRCA Treasurer, 2701 N Wakefield St, Arlington, VA 22207. You can also pay via PayPal to @DonaldsonRunCivAssoc. Thanks for supporting this all-volunteer organization!

ARE YOU REGISTERED TO VOTE IN THE NOVEMBER 4 ELECTION?

Neighbors:

There is an important Virginia election on November 4th, and we encourage all eligible adults to vote! Voter registration is easy. On the Virginia Voter Information – Citizen Portal, you can register to vote (using a Virginia DMV issued ID), as well as check your registration status. Please note that if you moved since the last time you voted, you must update your registration with your current address. Voter registration ends on Friday, October 24th. (If you miss the deadline, you can go to your polling place, register, and cast a provisional ballot.)

On November 4th, Arlingtonians will be voting for:
Governor
Lieutenant Governor
Attorney General
House of Delegates members (district-specific)
County Board member
School Board member

Early voting for the November 4th election starts September 19th. Please check here (<https://vote.arlingtonva.gov/Early-Voting>) for the times/places to vote early.

Make your voice heard in this important election. Register now! Thank you for voting!

The Current is distributed free of charge to all households in the Donaldson Run Civic Association (DRCA) area. DRCA, like all civic associations in Arlington, is a neighborhood organization, administered by elected volunteers. The DRCA promotes information sharing and discussion on neighborhood, local, and regional issues. DRCA is not affiliated with any political or religious group or with the Donaldson Run Recreation Association that operates the swimming pool on Marcey Road. Meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. at Taylor Elementary School (2600 North Stuart Street). Follow this newsletter for meeting dates. Only dues-paying DRCA residents are eligible to vote. DRCA boundaries are: Military Road on the east (including Marcey Road, North 26th Street, North 25th Place, and North Ridgeview Road); 26th/31st Street on the north; Lorcom Lane on the south (including North Randolph Street and 27th Streets south of Lorcom Lane); and Vernon Street on the west.

DRCA Board

President Bill Richardson 525-5270 1st VP John Seggerman 403-2844 2nd VP Amanda Weaver 202-365-3292 Secretary Dana Miller 202-841-3696 Treasurer Kathy Rehill 403-1064 Director Alisa Cowen 407-5324 Director John Fisher 623-1111 Director Charlie Henkin 294-4002 Director Laura Yoeckel-Kelly 362-5380 Editor Mary Cooper 407-8045

COUNTY PROPOSES TO REPLACE LOT COVERAGE STUDY WITH MORE LIMITED “LOW DENSITY” STUDY *Bill Richardson*

As discussed in our DRCA meetings (including with County Board members), earlier newsletters, and my September 1 note to those of you in our e mail group (please subscribe if you haven't!), lot coverage has long been one of our primary concerns. For years, our group of over 20 civic associations has urged the County Board to begin a study of the lot coverage provisions of the Zoning Ordinance, adopted 20 years ago, in light of the accelerating pace of teardowns of smaller homes replaced with extremely large ones. These pose several different concerns, apart from stormwater

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PROPOSED KENSINGTON SENIOR LIVING SITE SLATED FOR COUNTY REVIEW

Bill Richardson

At our next meeting on **October 1**, representatives from Kensington Senior living will make a presentation and answer your questions about their proposed 7-story elder care facility between the 7-11 and Lebanese Taverna, next to the Lee Heights Shops and along Langston Boulevard across from the DRCA neighborhood at Vermont Street. To review Kensington's application, go to drca.org/current-issues.

We encourage you to attend, to provide your views about the terms and conditions for any County approval for this project. We expect that review process to begin later this fall, with DRCA and other affected civic associations participating in the site plan review committee process coordinated by the Planning Commission.

In our September 2024 newsletter (see www.drca.org), we outlined some of the issues raised by Kensington's preliminary proposal. We had identified these in a joint letter to Kensington and County staff with the Cherrydale and Old Dominion civic associations, following an initial meeting with Kensington sponsored by the Langston Boulevard Alliance (LBA) that DRCA board members attended. Waverly Hills Civic Association generally supports the proposal, based on their views about the need for additional elder care facilities in our area and the abandonment by Artis of a prior proposal to provide such facilities nearby on Cherry Hill Road.

The issues raised in our letter last year were:

- the dramatic change in height next to our neighborhood
- parking and traffic
- the proposed narrowing of Upton Street at the back of Lebanese Taverna
- the County's Plan Langston Boulevard guidelines recommending 35% tree canopy • softening the "cliff" effect of the design, by setbacks from the street and stepbacks of top stories
- the need for adjacent public space to buffer the project from Lee Heights Shops and other as yet undetermined plans for redevelopment there

- the nature of "community benefits" generally required for such special site approvals. (Kensington has proposed a contribution to the County's affordable housing fund, together with "civic and community amenity space" on the first floor to be used among others by the Arlington Artists Alliance.)

Based on about 115 responses to our survey of DRCA members earlier this year:

- Although the County's Plan Langston Boulevard guidelines recommended approval of 7 stories at this particular site (over DRCA's strong objections), 71% of DRCA members felt this is too tall.
- 65% disapproved of Kensington's proposed alternative to a stepback, which is to move the Langston Boulevard side of the facility further back from the street, to a yet unspecified extent.
- 52% found insufficient the County's guideline for setbacks on Langston of 8 feet of sidewalk from the building, then 6 feet for street trees, then 5 feet for a bike lane, and then a 3 foot buffer.
- 74% found very important, and 90.5% found important, compliance with the County's guideline of 35% tree canopy. Staff is currently looking at the question of compliance with this goal.
- 58% wanted free parking for Lee Heights Shops patrons in the facility's planned garage.
 - 60% found the narrowing of Upton Street inadequate, which would preserve two way car access but not parking spaces.

We look forward to discussing these issues with Kensington representatives at our **October 1** meeting. Please try to attend.



LOT COVERAGE STUDY (continued from page 2)

challenges: clear cutting lots of mature trees; depleting our decreasing stock of smaller, more affordable homes; and dwarfing adjacent homes in our neighborhoods.

In 2023, our group as well as others – including the Arlington Tree Action Group and the Forestry & Natural Resources Commission (once chaired by the late Larry Finch, a DRCA board member) – persuaded the County Board to direct staff to initiate this lot coverage study. We also took members on a tour of some recent examples of the problem.

In 2024, our group met with staff and the Board to outline the issues we thought would be appropriate for the study. We also emphasize that after years of delay in addressing the problem (recognized by staff as early as 2014), time is now of the essence. In our view, the irreparable injuries to our neighborhoods from these teardowns week after week, year after year, call for prompt action.

In 2025, however, staff persuaded the Board to reverse course.

- First, despite having concluded that the major stormwater management challenge was enormous increases in the size of the homes themselves, rather than sidewalks and patios, **staff proposed not to study lot coverage rules in general or the building**

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footprints of those rules in particular.

- Second, **staff ignored all of these problems of large teardowns** apart from stormwater management.
- Third, staff suggested that instead of making lot coverage and building footprint limits more rigorous, **the Board could eliminate lot coverage limits entirely**, and replace them with a new (and so far unspecified) limit on impervious surface generally.
- Fourth, despite our concerns about the need to end the years of delays leading to the accelerated pace of large teardowns, staff proposed to slow roll its truncated study. Under its timetable, **the Board may not act even on its limited proposals until the end of 2026 at the earliest.**

In July 2025, our group of 21 civic associations from diverse neighborhoods wrote the County Board about our serious concerns with the inadequacies of this study and its timing, and the about face from the Board's 2023 directive. Because staff planned to begin a public engagement campaign about its truncated study in

September 2025, we asked for a response from the Board in August.

The Board never responded. Instead, staff initiated its public engagement campaign on its replacement "low density" study. I urge those of you concerned about this policy reversal to:

- participate in these public engagement events, set out at

<https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Programs/Sustainability/Stormwater/Low-Residential-Study>.

- let the County Board members know your views by e-mail (countyboard@arlingtonva.us).
- If one or more of you would like to speak with a Board member personally, I am happy to arrange that (e.g., on one of the "Open Door Monday" evenings one-on-one with a member of the Board).

The DRCA board will be discussing this issue at our **October 1** meeting at Taylor School, which I encourage you to attend.



DRCA STILL WORKING ON 23RD STREET TRAFFIC

ASSISTANCE IN THESE DYNAMIC TIMES

John Fisher

We're living in a moment marked by rapid shifts and deep uncertainty. For many in our community, these changes have made daily life more difficult. Whether it's a neighbor quietly struggling or a family impacted by shifting immigration policies, services are available.

If you know someone in need, or if you'd like to support the mission of the organizations listed below, please reach out. Even the smallest gesture can offer stability in an unpredictable world.

Food Assistance Providers

- Arlington Food Assistance Center (AFAC), www.afac.org – (703) 845-8486
- PathForward www.pathforwardva.org, (703) 228-7803
- St. Charles Church Pantry www.stcharleschurch.org, (703) 527-5500

Clothing & Essentials Providers

- Clothesline for Arlington Kids www.clotheslinearlington.org, (703) 304-9580
- Doorways In-Kind Program www.doorwaysva.org, (703) 504-9400

BACKUPS

John Seggerman

In considering an Arlington Neighborhoods Program (ANP) proposal to build a sidewalk on 23rd Street near Dorothy Hamm Middle School (DHMS), DRCA heard from residents that cars backing up on 23rd Street during student drop off and pickup times were a hindrance. Though these traffic backups are not within the purview of ANP, DRCA leadership has worked to address these concerns.

We met with DHMS Principal Ellen Smith as well as members of the Arlington County Police Department (ACPD). These officials have agreed to place additional signage on 23rd Street to remind DHMS parents that parent drop off/pickups are not permitted on 23rd Street. The sole location for parents with students at DHMS is from Vacation Lane onto the one-way driveway leading out to Langston Boulevard. Principal Smith has also reminded parents of this rule in her email notifications to parents.

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Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Church –

- www.ourladyqueenofpeace.org – (703) 979-5580 • Food Pantry – Weekly grocery distribution • Gabriel Project – Support for pregnant women and infants
- Matthew 25 – Clothing, household goods, and living essentials

Support for Older Adults

- Arlington Neighborhood Village – www.anvarlington.org
- Arlington Thrive – www.arlingtonthrive.org
- VICAP – www.vda.virginia.gov/vicap.htm
- Housing Assistance Bureau – housing.arlingtonva.us
- Legal Services of Northern Virginia – www.lsnv.org

GIVE BACK: VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AT POTOMAC OVERLOOK PARK

Dana Karangelen

For over 35 years, I've been walking the trails at Potomac Overlook Park. It's my favorite place for quiet morning walks, an escape after long days, and the perfect place to enjoy the beauty of the seasons right here in our Donaldson Run neighborhood.

While on one of those morning walks with my dog on a Saturday, I encountered a group of people working on the trail. Did you know that every Saturday, the park stewards and volunteers gather and play a big part in the upkeep of Potomac Overlook Park? They work to keep the trails clear, protect native plants, and remove invasive ones. Whether you've got a green thumb, like to get your hands dirty, or just enjoy being outdoors with good company, volunteering is a great way to pitch in.

Why volunteer?

- *Protect the environment:* Help preserve habitats for native plants and wildlife.
- *Build community:* Meet neighbors and make new friends while working side by side outdoors.
- *Learn something new:* Gain knowledge about local ecology, conservation, and sustainable practices.
- *Make an impact:* Every hour of volunteer work directly improves the park.

I asked Tyler John, who has worked in maintenance

at Potomac Overlook Park for the past seven years, about the Saturday volunteer program. He said, "You can really see the effects since we partnered with the park stewards (Arlington Master Naturalists) in 2020. Over the past five years, our park has become much clearer of invasive plants."

This park has been part of our community for decades, and with a little neighborly effort, we can keep it thriving for decades to come. Fall is the perfect time to join in! Here's the website for volunteer signup and information: www.signupgenius.com/go/porp.

STAY CONNECTED TO DRCA THROUGH EMAIL OR PRINT

Anne Wilson

DRCA emails the newsletter to those who have provided us with their email address, so please be sure that we have your current contact information. Additionally, we send a print version to those who prefer getting a hard copy. If you do not want the printed newsletter, simply email us at treasurer@drca.org to opt out.

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STATUS OF THREE TRAFFIC INTERSECTIONS

Bill Richardson

Military/Nelly Custis Circle. After many years of review and comment on the design of this controversial traffic circle, the County began construction of the permanent version this summer. Because of the difficulty of coordinating schedules with utility companies, staff advises that it is not expected to be completed until late 2027.

Through late October 2025, there will be no access to the circle through Nelly Custis Drive. Thereafter, expect a shorter period of no access to the circle through Military Road. For more details and updates, see

<https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Projects/Project-Types/Transportation/Projects/Military-Road-Safety-Improvements>.

The permanent version is planned to have a larger, more circular design than the temporary one did, which led to some navigational difficulties.

Lorcom/Vacation Intersection. This project requested by DRCA has received funding, but the

design is still under evaluation. In June 2025, following an open house, DRCA informed staff that their largely unprecedented design (a raised intersection) posed substantial concerns. We advised that our survey preferred (52%) some form of crosswalk beacon, or (38%) to couple the raised intersection with such a beacon, or (21%) to couple a beacon with a speed feedback indicator, or (18%) just such a sign. Only 12% favored staff's proposed design, which had been preceded by no public feedback.

Although staff advised in June that they would follow up "later this summer," as of this newsletter we have not heard back. We are pursuing this further.

Lorcom/Langston Intersection. DRCA members have raised concerns about crashes and pedestrian safety issues at this intersection. Providing police crash data, we suggested to County staff in March 2025 that their promised review of this and other Langston Boulevard intersections include consideration of these issues, including possibly installing a left-hand turn signal on Langston.

Having heard nothing further on this issue, we

asked for a response in July. In August, staff acknowledged receipt of our comments, but provided no further insight about this question. We are also pursuing this further.

COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

Charlie Henkin

The Code of Virginia requires local planning commissions to prepare and recommend a comprehensive plan and to review that plan every five years to consider whether it should be amended to reflect current needs. By state law, this plan is a tool for “guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted, and harmonious development” within the County, and it must “consider incorporating...strategies to promote transit-oriented development.”

A central part of Arlington’s current Plan is that it “concentrates high density development within the Metrorail Transit Corridors and preserves lower density residential areas throughout the County.” However, it appears that the County Board and staff are now asking whether to revisit this core principle.

Community Planning and Housing Development (CPHD) Director Samia Byrd briefed the County Board on March 14 on the CPHD Work Plan for FY 2025. She and her staff described the planned revision of the Comprehensive Plan and General

Land Use Plan that will get underway this year. Their briefing suggested that staff will recommend moving away from the 40-year “compact” that currently preserves some low-density areas and concentrates density around transit corridors. The implications of such a move include budgetary and infrastructure issues and the composition of the DRCA neighborhood.

The meaning of the slides in the presentation is not clear. They refer to “people-centric guiding principles,” which would “replace...existing goals/objectives” and promote “interwoven equity” and “update...land use and placemaking goals.” Staff refer without further details to “Arlington’s vision for growth and development” and a need to “update” the “range of land uses,” as well as “establish new or broader land uses in focused areas.” The Arlington County Civic Federation adopted a resolution in June that asks for clarification of what substantive issues the revised Plan actually would address.

The County has sought feedback on how to frame the introduction to a revised Plan. We encourage you to make your views known. While the online feedback form closed on June 30, you can still let the County know your views via this link: www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Projects/Plans-Studies/Comprehensive-Plan/Update/GetInvolved.

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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FOR DONALDSON RUN CIVIC ASSOCIATION Please check your mailing label on page 8 to see how many residents in your home are members and the latest year for which dues have been paid. Dues cover a calendar year. Contributions are not tax deductible. Note that only members whose dues have been paid 60 days in advance are allowed to vote on civic association business.

Dues: \$20 per household per calendar year. Payment for 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 years (circle one) Total dues:

\$_____ Newsletter contribution: \$_____ Total enclosed: \$_____ New resident: Yes

_____ No _____ Email only copy of newsletter Yes _____ No _____

Name(s):

Phone: _____ email address: _____

Address:

Are you already on the DRCA email list? _____ If you are not on the DRCA listserv, we recommend

that you sign up for it so that you will be notified of issues in a timely way. Would you like to be added to this listserv? _____

Special Interests/Volunteer Areas/Comment

Please make check payable to Donaldson Run Civic Association.

Mail to: Kathy Rehill, Treasurer, 2701 N. Wakefield Street, Arlington, VA 22207 or if you prefer to pay electronically, via PayPal @DonaldsonRunCivAssoc.

HIRE A NEIGHBOR

Calling all neighborhood teens! Do you shovel snow? Walk pets? Your Donaldson Run neighbors need you. Send an email to Mary@drca.org and we'll list the service you'd like to provide.

Babysitting

- Zoya Ridgway, 13 y.o. text 703-864-8271
- Maia Corson, 15 y.o., 571-329-5871, maia.corson@gmail.com
- Mackenzie Rau, 17 y.o., 703-655-5718, Mackenzie.rau21@gmail.com
- Iris Aitken, 16 y.o., 571-242-7994 or iris_aitken@icloud.com
- Ella Paris, 17 y.o., 571-317-4962

Cat Sitting

- Zoya Ridgway, 13 y.o. text 703-864-8271
- Ayla Mehmood, High Schooler, text 571-599-8282

Experienced in caring for cats with special needs.

Dog Walking/Sitting

- Zoya Ridgway, 13 y.o. text 703-864-8271
- Maia Corson, 15 y.o., 571-329-5871, maia.corson@gmail.com
- Iris Aitken, 16 y.o., 571-242-7994 or iris_aitken@icloud.com

Guinea Pig/Hamster Sitting

- Zoya Ridgway, 13 y.o. text 703-864-8271

Lawn and Garden Care

- Iris Aitken 16 y.o., 571-242-7994 or iris_aitken@icloud.com

Donaldson Run Civic Association
c/o Kathy Rehill, Treasurer
2701 N. Wakefield Street
Arlington, VA 22207

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Civic Association information.

PRSRT STD

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2863**

This is your neighborhood newsletter. See page 2 for

**The next Donaldson Run Civic Association
Meeting is on Wednesday, October 1 at 7:30 p.m. A
social half hour will begin at 7 p.m.**

Agenda:

**Kensington Senior Living Presentation and Q & A
Discussion of Current Neighborhood Issues**

at Taylor Elementary School