



Crystal City Library

A Dream Long Denied

A Little Bit of History

- November 12, 2015, CCCA Meeting: Diane Kresh, Director of Libraries, presented her general/countywide topics and visions for high-density areas in Arlington, like Crystal City. She then applied that to Crystal City, where we have no library, and discussed with us what might be possible to do to improve our situation.
- August 16, 2016: Community Information Meeting; Diane Kresh Briefs CCCA on new Pop Up Library Ideas
- September 28, 2016: Crystal City Connection Pop Up Library Opens in Underground; 1,222 square feet;
- December 27, 2019: Crystal City Connection Library Closes
- November 2019: Livability 22202 incorporates “a walkable, permanent library in the Crystal City neighborhood” in its Framework and Action Plan
- March 21, 2020/May 15, 2021: Library in Center Park is a community benefit tied to 1900 Crystal Drive and 2001 S. Clark/Bell site plans.
- March 2024: BOOM. County asks JBG to provide \$5.8 M instead of using the Center Park site



Crystal City Library Pop Up Innovation

2117 Crystal Plaza Arcade
Arlington, Virginia 22202

Fall 2016 - Summer 2017

CONNECTION
Crystal City

Your pop-up library

“Meeting You Where you live.”

*The Connection:
Your pop-up library*

- ▶ WiFi & coffee-friendly
- ▶ Technology gadgets
- ▶ Freethinker space



ARLINGTON
VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF LIBRARIES

4/3/24

#libconnection

library.arlingtonva.us/connection

4



What happened?

- Library budget couldn't handle the staffing costs after 3 years, despite JBG willingness to extend lease
- Au Bon Pain coffee shop closed across the hall which was a big draw, as was the Tech Shop which also closed.
- Traffic flow decreased in the Underground as JBG moved retail to the street.
- Afterwards, construction closed the 20th Street Underground passageway and further affected the Underground traffic flow.
- COVID reduced businesses in the Underground
- Since then, JBG has canceled many Underground leases. But a full library with a coffee shop could renew interest.

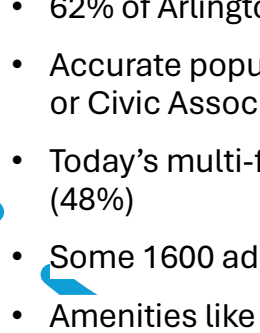


What Did We Learn from the Pop Up Library?

- Apartment dwellers loved the convenience of a library close by.
- Foot traffic is essential, largely due to retail and especially a coffee shop. When the Au Bon Pain closed in 2018, library visits dropped off.
- Folks who didn't have library cards, dropped in and got them there. The Walk in count for 2016 and 2017 ranged from 753 to 1851, averaging around 1500 per month.
- Crystal City's highest demographic is the 25-45 year old range. This was the group that frequented the Pop Up the most.
- Families with children enjoyed visiting and borrowing reading kits and puzzles. They expressed desire for a children's corner and events, after school and on weekends.
- We need to focus on attracting the younger/larger components of CC residents; a Tech focus, with material in more modern media and with an assortment that is more selective; and space and reading material to make it also something like a 'reading room' or place to hang out.



Crystal City Demographics (2023 Arlington County Profile)

- The population in the 22202 zip code area has increased by 26 percent since the year 2000.
 - Arlington County Forecast for Richmond Hwy Corridor 2020-2050
 - Population growth: 117.5%; from 22,892 (2020) to 49,800 (2050)
 - Households growth: 115.9%; from 13,989 (2020) to 30,200 (2050)
 - Housing Units growth: 102.7%; from 15,983 (2020) to 32,400 (2050)
 - Jobs Growth: 106.3%; from 50,600 (2020) to 104,400 (2050)
 - Predicted growth in Richmond Hwy corridor is more than twice that of RB or Columbia Pike Corridors
 - 62% of Arlington's population is forecast to reside in the three planning corridors in 2050.
 - Accurate population figures for Crystal City are hard to determine because they vary, depending on Census tracts or Civic Association
 - Today's multi-family housing supply and population are closely split between Pentagon City (52%) and Crystal City (48%)
 - Some 1600 additional new housing units coming online in Crystal City in the next few years.
 - Amenities like a library are essential for this growing population; food, drink, and a movie theater aren't enough.
- 



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY MANAGER

2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 302, Arlington, VA 22201
TEL 703-228-3120 FAX 703-228-3218 TTY 703-228-4611 www.arlingtonva.us

December 11, 2019

Ms. Fuller,

Thank you for your letter. Based on direction from the County Board, The Connection will close on December 27, 2019. From its inception, The Connection was planned as a temporary location. As you are aware, in July 2018, the County entered into a public agreement to extend the lease at The Connection until December 31, 2019. This closure is a mutual decision between the County and the landlord, JBG, and was written into the leasing agreement. Notice of the closure was, as noted, first provided in July 2018 and we provided a reminder and notice of the closure including logistical details about picking up holds, which has been available at The Connection and on the library website since December 2, 2019. Patrons will be directed to Aurora Hills library, which is a full-service library location located less than a mile away.

Since the final extension of the lease in July 2018, the pop-up library has seen decreased foot traffic, lower circulation, and lower program attendance as other tenants surrounding the location closed. In particular, the closing of Au Bon Pain directly across the hall in December 2018 was significant. Monthly average circulation has dropped year-over-year since FY 2018. Since FY 2018, monthly average circulation has dropped by 14 percent. Continuing to staff this location is not the best use of library resources.

Please know that Arlington County is committed to finding and securing spaces for community facilities in the broader Crystal City/Pentagon City area. Guidance in the Crystal City Sector Plan sets a foundation for future decisions to address the demand and need for such facilities in the area. Additionally, the PenPlace Phased Development Site Plan, approved in 2013, includes a community facility component, sized approximately 20,000 square feet, that is slated to be realized with future development of that block. There will be ample conversations with the community about identifying community facilities such as libraries, recreation centers and performing arts spaces, going forward. The next such opportunity for conversation and community input will begin shortly in concert with the formulation of Arlington's next Capital Improvement Plan, to be presented to the County Board for its consideration in mid-2020.

Thank you for your interest and for your support of The Connection over the past three years. We look forward to working with you and the other Civic Associations in planning the future of Crystal City.

Sincerely,

Mark J. Schwartz
County Manager

4/3/24

“Since the final extension of the lease in July 2018, the pop-up library has seen decreased foot traffic, lower circulation, and lower program attendance as other tenants surrounding the location closed. In particular, the closing of Au Bon Pain directly across the hall in December 2018 was significant.

Please know that Arlington County is committed to finding and securing spaces for community facilities in the broader Crystal City/Pentagon City area. Guidance in the Crystal City Sector Plan sets a foundation for future decisions to address the demand and need for such facilities in the area. Additionally, the PenPlace Phased Development Site Plan, approved in 2013, includes a community facility component, sized approximately 20,000 square feet, that is slated to be realized with future development of that block. There will be ample conversations with the community about identifying community facilities such as libraries, recreation centers and performing arts spaces, going forward.

What is the community vision?

- Expand library services into one of Arlington's fastest growing neighborhoods of growing population; add energy and amenities to National Landing
- Integrate the Library into the daily lives of Arlington residents, geared to our community dwellers: e.g., Technology, DIY information, tool lending library, events, meetings, study rooms, etc.
 - Public computers/printers
 - Family play/read area/children's nook and after school (5-7 pm) and Saturday morning activities for children
 - Café built into it, privately run, but within the library itself or right next to it
 - Community features for meeting and socializing: no community space exists in CC
 - Events (author talks, crafts, clubs, etc.)
- Is 8,000-10,000 sq feet enough? What about 2 levels of 5k each?
- Library would be the only County facility East of Route 1

Could Arlington be as innovative as DC or Others?

“The mysterious, luxe building at 23rd and L streets NW was so appealing that some Washingtonians paid people to line up overnight for a chance to purchase the condos on its upper floors.” (West End Library; Washingtonian, Nov 30, 2017)

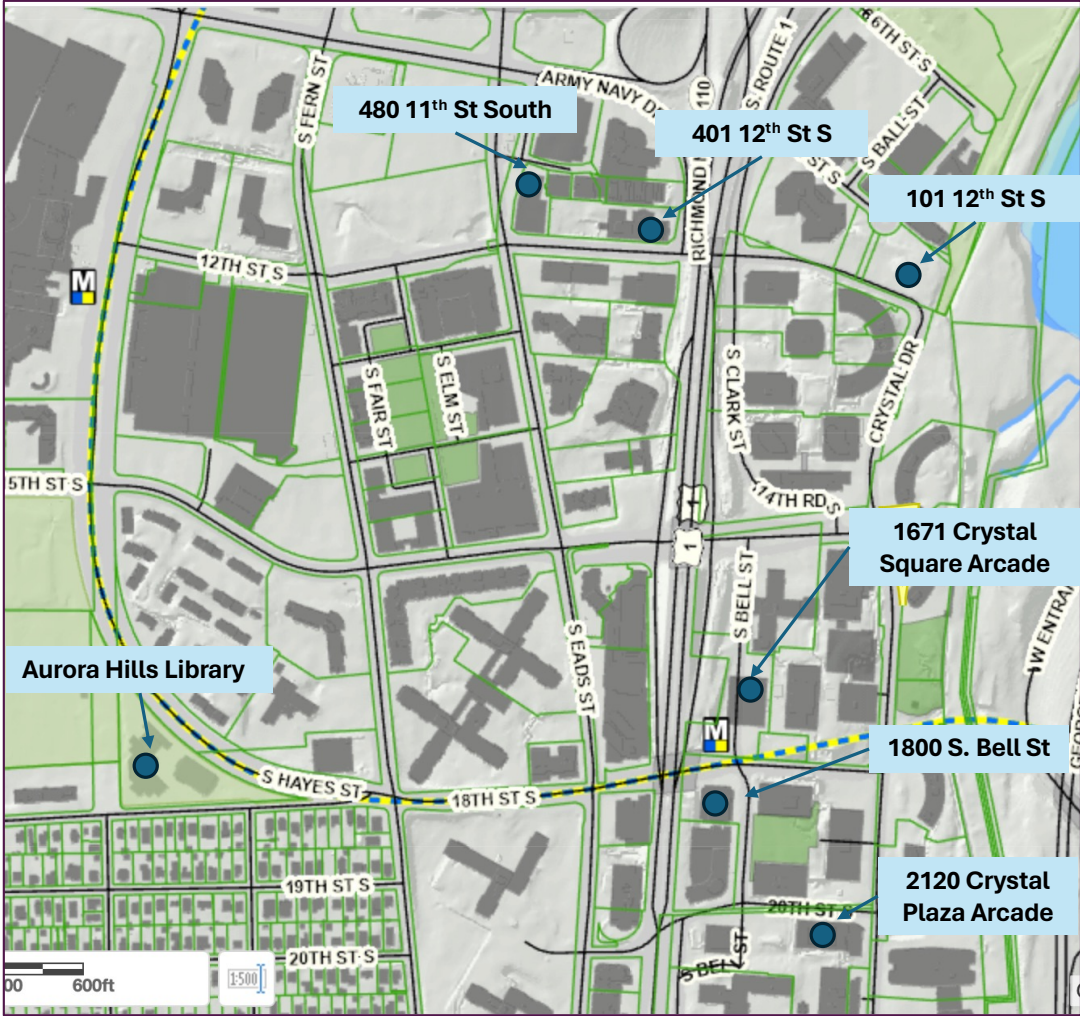


So where
could it be
built?
We need
innovative
ideas.

- Library needs to be:
 - Innovative
 - Close to transportation (Metro, Metroway, VRE, Buses)
 - Near foot traffic (where do people walk?)
 - Near retail, including a coffee shop
 - Could be 2 stories
 - Exciting or enticing

Potential Library Sites

- 1800 S Bell St: 2 story (Underground and ground); apartments above; close to Metro
- 101 S 12th Street: 2 story (Underground and ground); offices above
- 1671 Crystal Square Arc (former Rite Aid Underground; large space close to Metro and “The Landing”)
- 2120 Crystal Plaza Arc (various Underground stores closing, including Crystal Boutique)
- The Sage, 480 11th Street (ground floor; apartments above)
- The Lenox Club, 401 12th St S: (ground floor; apartments above)



What's Next?

- Can Arlington County and the developers talk about a repurposed or new building, perhaps designed 2 stories with residences above?
- How can the community and Livability help in the design process?
- Could a donor like Amazon promote a library for the growing community?
- Can the National Landing BID help?