

# CRYSTAL CITY INSIDER

*The monthly newsletter of the Crystal City Civic Association*



**October 2024**

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## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

The Underground. The airport. Virginia Tech's new high-tech campus.

The association's September meeting was a busy, newsy, sometimes contentious affair.

Matt Mattauszek, the county's designated planner for our area, attended the meeting, which is important for making sure the county hears our point of view.

**JBG Smith's presentation** about developments above and below ground was as important for what was not said as what was. Here are my observations:

- JBGS does not see a future for underground retail and has no plans to sink more resources into what it sees as a failing concept.
- If the developer has any-plans for the Underground, it's not sharing them. In my view, they probably don't have a clue what to do with the space, and investigating possibilities is low on their priority list.
- The company would face substantial legal obstacles if it tried to close the Underground altogether. For example, at the association's urging, Underground requirements have been incorporated into building site plans over the years; the county would push back hard on breaking them.
- Audience members expressed concerns about safety in the Underground, calling for JBGS to beef up the presence of roving security guards and not rely on cameras to deter crime. The developers' representatives appeared to take those concerns seriously. We shall see.
- On the bright side, the developer says it has a new grocery store lined up to open in spring at the Amazon Fresh site but cannot elaborate for contractual reasons.
- JBGS reports progress in attracting high-end retail to the area, which is essential to Crystal City's success. Further, new residential buildings are leasing at better-than-expected rates, and the Water Park businesses are so successful that they are thinking of adding remote food preparation.

Perhaps JBG Smith would benefit from the inventive minds coming to the area in January when Virginia Tech opens its futuristic 11-story [Innovation Campus](#) in Potomac Yard. Graduate and post-graduate computer science studies will be the main focus, but the building will also serve the master's in business program. Virginia Tech plans to emphasize experiential learning – perhaps the university could make finding a solution for the Underground one of its projects.

As to the airport presentation, here are my takeaways:

- We were told airports get 50 percent of their revenue from parking. No wonder their plans are car-centric! Still plans for the CCDCA (Crystal City to DCA) pedestrian/cyclist bridge are going forward, but don't rush out to buy new traveling shoes – it's not likely to be finished until the end of the decade.
- JBG Smith faces a big fight to remove the ramp from the airport roadway to Crystal Drive to make

way for a new residential project. The Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority told us that the ramp provides essential access to service trucks and emergency vehicles. At this point in the association meeting there were real fireworks. I won't hazard a guess as to who will win, JBGS or the MWA.

**Revamping the newsletter** With this issue, we're launching an overhaul of the association newsletter. Our goal is to have members taking on beats – commercial and residential development; transportation; arts and recreation; and retail and restaurant. They will track civic, commercial, and public activities, and then offer monthly summaries that interpret how the news affects you. We also welcome stories about people and places in the area. But we need volunteers! You don't have to be a polished writer, just conscientious and curious. If interested, [let us know](#).

**Speaking of volunteers** We have key officer positions open. Details appear on page 4 of this newsletter.

**A milestone birthday** At the November 20<sup>th</sup> annual meeting, we will celebrate our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a civic association! We will also hear presentations by the Parks Department on the new Market Square Park and by Arlington County on tenant rights.

- Eric Cassel, CCCA president

## CIVIC ASSOCIATION AND LIVABILITY 22202 ISSUES

### CCCA Call for Elections

Civic minded? We need you! Elections for the following CCCA officer positions will be held at the Nov. 20 annual meeting:

**Membership Liaison** Primary duties include leading outreach efforts to existing and potential voting members; initiating or coordinating informal gatherings for the membership, whether in the form of information exchanges, social communications, or social events; publicizing the role of the association; and disseminating information about issues and developments of interest to the resident community.

**Communications Coordinator** Primary duties include helping to maintain the association's website and Facebook pages, producing a periodic newsletter for distribution to association members, transmitting notices of meetings, and communicating with external entities, as necessary.

CCCA officers hold their position for two years and may renew only for a second two-year term in the same office. The CCCA bylaws call for elections at our annual general meeting as the first item on the agenda; this year's meeting will take place on Nov. 20. **These positions will be open for nominations as of Oct. 20.** If you are interested in serving in one of these positions, please send an [email](#) to the Election Committee with a short paragraph on your background. **Nominations will close on Nov. 5.** In accordance with our bylaws, no nominations can be made from the floor at the annual meeting. We will provide an email after Nov. 5 with the names and brief backgrounds of the candidates.

## INFORMATION AND EVENTS – ARLINGTON COUNTY

### New grocer to replace Amazon Fresh in spring

JBG Smith says it has a new grocery store lined up to open in spring 2025 at the Amazon Fresh site but cannot elaborate for contractual reasons. Addressing last month's CCCA meeting, representatives of the developer said a hardware store and a hair salon will be opening soon. Such additions fit into what urban planners call a 15-minute city, a neighborhood where all essential services are located within a 15-minute walk.

### Voting kicks off early at Long Bridge Aquatic Center

You can avoid Nov. 5 election day crowds by voting early. Ballots can be cast through Nov. 2 at various county sites including the Long Bridge Aquatic and Fitness Center. Bring an [approved ID](#). Hours are:

**Through Oct. 15** Weekdays, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

**Oct. 16 to Nov. 2** Weekdays, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.; Saturdays, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sundays, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.

Other key dates for the election:

**Oct. 15** Last day to register to vote or update existing registration

**Oct. 16** [Same day](#) registration for provisional ballots begins

**Oct. 25** Last day to apply for a mail ballot. Ballots must be returned postmarked on or before Nov. 5 and received by Nov. 8 by noon.

You can check your registration, update your registration through October 15, apply for mail ballot, and check your precinct location [here](#). If you miss the Oct. 15 registration deadline, you can still use the Same Day Registration form to cast a provisional ballot – either during **in-person** early voting or on Election Day.

What's on the ballot?

- US president, senator, congressman (8th District)
- County Board (1 seat) and School Board (2 seats). Note that the County Board election will be ranked choice.
- Constitutional amendments and bond questions

For details, see [county's election page](#).

### Virginia Tech set to open Innovation Center early next year

Virginia Tech's [Innovation Campus](#) is due to open in January in the geometric-shaped, glass-enclosed building in North Potomac Yard. Classes start Jan. 21. At capacity, 600 students could be enrolled.

The campus's main focus will be on graduate studies in computer science and computer engineering. It will also offer [MBA programs](#). Lauren Augustine, VT director of government and community relations, presented highlights at the association's September meeting:

**Student Demographics** Domestic students, 54 percent; women, 27 percent; minority, 21 percent.

**Experiential learning** Students will be challenged with real-world projects in partnership with technically innovative companies and government agencies.

**K-12 STEM Space** Dedicated space for middle and high school students in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

**Future Expansion** Potential to build 2 additional buildings as enrollment increases.

## Web-based ARLnow absorbs print-based GazetteLeader

For the first time in nearly a century, Arlington will not be served by a local print newspaper. Local News Now, the parent company of ARLnow, has purchased the GazetteLeader, which printed its last edition on Sept. 25. GazetteLeader editor Scott McCaffrey and sports editor Dave Facinoli will move over to Local News Now, which in addition to ARLnow, operates online news sites covering Alexandria and Fairfax County. The weekly Gazette Leader was launched last year after the Sun Gazette closed. That weekly in turn succeeded the daily Northern Virginia Sun, which was printed from the 1930s to 1998. ARLnow, which launched in 2010, now has a staff of nine.

## Arlington named second-most educated city in nation

Arlington has the nation's highest rate of bachelor's and advanced degrees, and the lowest high school dropout rate, according to a study by Forbes Advisor. The financial news service reports that Arlington has the highest bachelor's degree completion rate in the country, with 78 percent adults 25 and older earning one. At 4.3 percent, the County has the nation's lowest high school dropout rate. Just over 42 percent of Arlingtonians hold graduate degrees. Arlington lost its overall No. 1 ranking to Atlanta this year, based on the weighted metrics used by Forbes. [Learn more here.](#)

## Help a less fortunate neighbor by donating toiletries, clothing

From toiletries to T-shirts, backpacks to jackets, the county police are collecting basic necessities to help unsheltered people. Officers will accept donations for the Essentials Drive at the Lee Harrison Shopping Center (2425 N. Harrison St.) and the Arlington County Police Department (1425 N. Courthouse Rd.) on Oct. 4, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Items should be new and unopened. [Learn more here.](#)

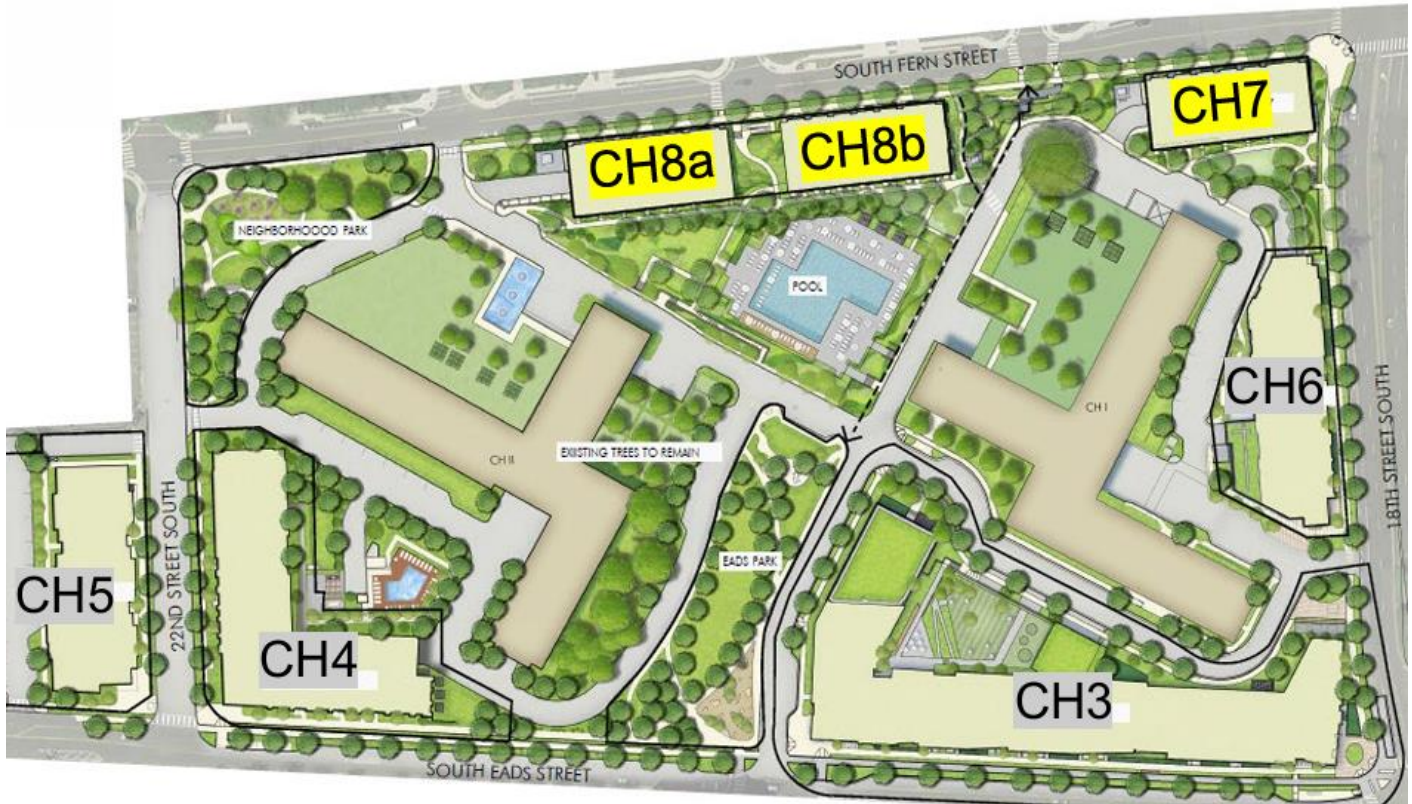
## Exchange banter rather than papers at Coffee with a Cop Day

As part of National Coffee with a Cop Day, residents are invited to chat with Arlington officers about their concerns and get to know not just members of the force but others in the community. Morning and afternoon chats are set for Oct. 2: Idido's Coffee and Social House, 1107 S. Walter Reed Dr., 8:30-10:30 a.m.; and Compass Coffee, 4710 Langston Blvd., 12:30-2:30 p.m. [Learn more here.](#)



## DEVELOPMENT

### Major makeover underway at Crystal Houses



Work is underway on Crystal House 3 at bottom. Meanwhile, plans for townhomes at CH 7, 8, and 8b, at top, are still winding their way through county boards.



A raft of new residential buildings are planned for site of the Crystal Houses.

When you head over to Arlington’s restaurant row on 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, you likely pass the 18-acre site known as the Crystal Houses Block. It’s now home to a pair of large high-rise apartment buildings developed in the early 1960s by the Charles E. Smith Company. One of the buildings contained the large crystal chandelier from which Crystal City got its name. (Attention sleuths: the chandelier’s current whereabouts are unknown).

Those two original buildings are about to get a lot of company as the large tracts of parking lots will be replaced with additional apartment buildings, senior housing, and townhomes. Extensive underground lots will be built to accommodate new and current residents.

The area is bounded by 18th Street S to the north, South Eads Street to the east, 22nd Street S to the south, and South Fern Street to the west. It also includes a small portion of the Restaurant Row block closest to the corner of South Eads and 22nd Street S, which is currently used for parking.

The property has changed hands several times over the past decade. Since 2021, it was acquired by the Washington Housing Conservancy. Three-quarters of the existing apartments are designated for [workforce housing](#), based on annual median income (AMI). Much of the additional housing will also be set aside as affordable units.

Construction began earlier this year on the 432-unit [Crystal House No. 3](#) facing South Eads Street and a small part of 18<sup>th</sup> Street S. Since then, the focus has been on townhouses along South Fern Street, designated as Crystal House Nos. 7 and 8. Developers discussed revisions to the site plan at a pair of County meetings last month. The latest plans call for three 3-story buildings containing 42 units. Each will have three bedrooms and 2.5 baths and sell for around \$1.2 million. The developers hope to finish by spring 2028. Further meetings will be held this fall by the Site Plan Review Committee, Planning Commission, and the County Board. [More details here.](#)



*Artist rendering of townhome buildings planned for Crystal House Nos. 7 and 8 along South Fern Street.*

## **Judge rejects county effort to increase multi-unit housing**

A circuit court judge dealt a blow last month to Arlington County's Expanding Housing Option, overturning the Missing Middle zoning changes.

Pending further legal action, the county cannot issue permits that allow for building up to six-unit buildings on properties previously zoned for single-family homes.

The County Board, which passed the provision in March 23, is considering its options, including an appeal.

Judge David Schell ruled that the county failed to consider local impacts, such as strains on sewer lines and other infrastructure, and to follow proper procedures in passing and implementing the ordinance.

[www.crystalcitycivic.org](http://www.crystalcitycivic.org)  
[www.facebook.com/crystalcitycivic](https://www.facebook.com/crystalcitycivic)



Missing Middle had been touted as a means to meet Arlington's growth projections while improving affordable housing. There is no single silver bullet that will generate the quality and type of housing that is needed. In the wake of the judge's ruling, the county faces a choice: Do we plan for growth, or do we become an increasingly exclusive wealth enclave?

Read more [here](#).

## Where things stand elsewhere in the building world ...

- Active site plan applications:

[RiverHouse](#) The 36-acre site is located in Pentagon City, bounded by Army Navy Drive to the north, South Joyce Street to the east, 16th Street S to the south, and South Lynn Street to the west. JBG Smith plans to dramatically expand the number of apartment and condo buildings. Site Plan Review Committee online engagement just concluded, and a SPRC meeting will be held Oct. 24.

[Block W](#) 2451 Crystal Drive. JBG Smith proposal for 7-story apartment building. Planning Commission and County Board reviews will be held this month.

[Crystal Plaza Apartments](#) 2101 and 2111 Richmond Hwy. Dweck is proposing mixed residential and commercial.

- Recently approved site plans:

[12th Street Landing](#) (TSA site), 601 and 701 12th Street S. Brookfield Properties plans to demolish existing buildings and replace with three structures, containing residential, retail, and possibly hotel facilities.

- Construction projects:

**2000/2001 Richmond Highway** JBG Smith will begin leasing apartments in eastern tower by end of year.

[PenPlace \(Amazon HQ2\)](#) Preconstruction utility work is underway.

## TRANSPORTATION





### Pilot project adjusts meter rates to open up on-street parking

Arlington is experimenting with automatically adjusting parking-meter prices in the area to make sure some spaces are always available, thus reducing the time drivers spend circling the block. Optimally, if you're willing to pay a higher rate, you should be able to find a space anytime, for example, on Crystal Drive. Prices in high-demand areas will be adjusted at peak and off-peak times. The rates will be reevaluated on a quarterly basis, using data from in-ground sensors that register whether a space is occupied.

The county says the program is not intended to increase overall parking revenue or create fast-changing metered parking. Further, it will not reduce the number of ADA-accessible parking spaces. Details for what has been dubbed Performance Parking Pilot are spelled out [here](#).

While increasing rates at in-demand spots, the county will lower rates at those that tend not to be occupied. For example, on 12<sup>th</sup> Street, the prices are much lower than on Crystal Drive.

### Pricing Change Overview

Space Prices Changing		Total	Rosslyn-Ballston	Richmond Highway
	Increasing	2309	1607	702
	Staying the Same	1273	891	382
	Decreasing	506	65	441
	Increasing + Decreasing	437	415	22

The County provides real-time data on parking availability at several downloadable sites: [ParkMobile](#), [eXactnav](#) and [CurbIQ](#). To drill deep down on trends and other parking-related information, visit [public dashboard](#).

The map below gives a general idea of parking prices:



*Parking prices will increase along dark blue areas and decrease in lighter color strips. In addition, prices will change between peak and nonpeak hours.*

## It's a jungle out there

Why is there no landscape maintenance on the new Boundary Channel Interchange near the Aquatics Center? Recently the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) completed the two roundabouts at the I-395 interchange. The construction was a dramatic improvement over the previous confusing mess of an interchange. In addition, access to Long Bridge Park Aquatics Center was improved.

But the grass is being overrun with weeds, and the landscaping is left unattended. It looks terrible. Why? Arlington County gave this explanation: "The interchange is owned in irregular parcels by the Pentagon, National Park Service, VDOT, and Arlington County." As a result, all the parties are arguing over who should maintain the landscaping.

The CCCA is going to ask the Crystal-City-Pentagon-City Review Council to draft a letter to all four parties about resolving the landscape issues. The possibilities could include low-maintenance plantings, statues, and other parking artwork. Perhaps businesses or local service groups could be asked to adopt a circle.

Informally, the CCCA plans to look into possible solutions and partnerships. Have ideas? [Email here](#).



### ***Going in circles***

*So many agencies oversee the Boundary Channel interchange that no one is taking responsibility for maintenance.*

## North Glebe Road Bridge Replacement

The Virginia Department of Transportation is hosting a public hearing on the North Old Glebe Road bridge over North Glebe Road (Route 120). Review the [project information here](#), and attend the meeting at Discovery Elementary School, 5241 N. 36th St., on Oct. 28 at 7 p.m.



## PARKS AND RECREATION



*Rendering of Arlington Junction Park at corner of South Eads Street and Army Navy Drive.*

### A first for Crystal City: a county-owned park

It's tiny in size – just under an acre – but a major milestone.

Construction is underway for Arlington Junction Park, which will be the first county park created since the birth of Crystal City in the 1960s. Completion is expected in winter 2025-2026.

Better known for its shape, the Teardrop parcel forms a narrow triangle. From a base bordering Army Navy Drive, the site runs along South Eads Street next to the Altaire and Sage residential developments. It crosses 11<sup>th</sup> Street before ending in a point at 12<sup>th</sup> Street.

The park is opposite the site of the spiraling tower planned to be the signature building of Amazon HQ2. It will be within walking distance of the Pentagon City and Crystal City Metro stops, and Metropolitan, Long Bridge, and Virginia Highlands parks.

The park will retain the large Cottonwood tree that sits near the site's center on South Eads. New trees will line much of the perimeter, creating an urban oasis from the surrounding high rises and busy roadways.

### Why is this important?

There was no master plan for Crystal City. It was instead the result of a series of lucky opportunities. In 1960, the area was home to junk yards, industrial sites, cheap motels, and a drive-in movie theater. The Charles E. Smith Company negotiated a 99-year lease with the brick company, Washington Terra Cotta, for an existing strip mall and built Crystal House I. As the area grew, the developers created a number of green areas, "pocket parks," and the centrally located Water Park. All of these remained in the private



hands of the subsequent developers, Vornado, and now JBG Smith. So it's significant that Teardrop could be the first of a series of public parks in Crystal City. In the JBG Smith pipeline, for example, are the following potential public parks:

**Gateway Park** at the entrance to Long Bridge Park, which hinges on the construction of the approved but long stalled [101 S 12<sup>th</sup> Street office building](#).

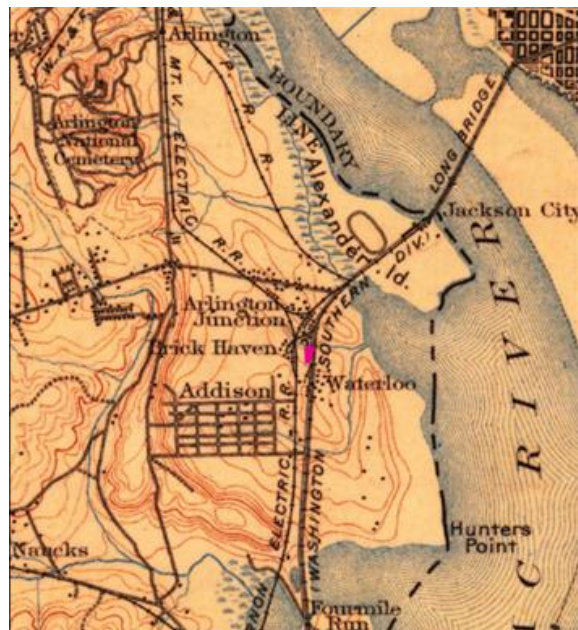
**Metro Market Square, along 18 Street South** between the current and planned entrances to the Crystal City Metro.

**Center Park**, at 1801 S. Bell Street.

## The history behind the name



Courtesy of USGS



**1885 (at far left)**  
C & O Canal runs through what is now Crystal city.  
**1900 (at left)**  
Trolley from DC splits into various lines at Arlington Junction, site of the new park.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a canal passed along what is now South Eads Street, connecting Alexandria to the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal in Georgetown. The Alexandria Canal was abandoned in 1886, and an electric trolley was constructed along its towpath a decade later.

At what became known as Arlington Junction, the trolley from Washington, D.C., split into lines heading to Mount Vernon, Rosslyn, and Arlington National Cemetery. The tracks were removed in the 1930s, in part to make way for the George Washington Parkway.

In more recent times, Arlington Junction was to have been the site of a maintenance shed for a 21<sup>st</sup> century streetcar. Plans for that system were dropped in 2014; nine years later, the county authorized Arlington Junction Park.

## FUN STUFF TO SEE OR DO

### Gallery closing in Underground with one last gala

The Gallery Underground will close its 3,000-square-foot space on Oct. 4, forced to shut down as JBG Smith is clearing out all the tenants of the once thriving commercial area. But gallery will go out with a splash, the annual Artrageous silent auction, a gala fundraiser from 6 to 9 p.m.

Located at 2100 Crystal Drive, the gallery has been the main home of the Arlington Artists Alliance since 2012. In July, it opened a new gallery at The Crossing Clarendon, 2700 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 330.

The alliance's executive director, Christina Papanicolaou, told ARLnow that the group has seen its membership grow 50 percent over the past year and plans to carry on with other planned events and partnerships with business, the county, and the Arlington Career Center.

For tickets to the gala and more on the alliance, visit [here](#).

### 9/11 walk takes Water Park to Pentagon Memorial loop

The second annual walk follows a 3-and-a-half mile loop from The Water Park to the Pentagon National Memorial and back via the Long Bridge Park trail, Oct. 5, 9 a.m.-2 p.m.

Speakers include US Rep. Don Beyer (D-VA); retired US Army Colonel Robert Dannemiller, who was working at the Pentagon on 9/11/01; and Thomas Heidenberger, a retired pilot whose wife was a flight attendant on American Airlines Flight 77. Register by Oct. 4. Cost is \$40 plus registration fee; children under age 13 free. Sponsored by the nonprofit September 11 National Memorial Trail. [Sign up here](#).

### What's doing at Met Park

Here are regularly scheduled events at Metropolitan Park, 1330 S Fair St.:

**Tuesday Farmers Market** 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Through Oct. 29.

**Fit @ Met** Wednesdays, 8-9 a.m. Through Oct. 23. Instructor-led classes vary weekly. [Read more](#).

**Jazz @ Met** Thursdays, 4:30-6:30 p.m. Oct. 3: Paul Bailey Quintet (Post-bop); Oct. 10: Fran Vielma Quartet (Pan American Jazz); Oct. 17: Allison Crockett (Neo-Soul); Oct. 24: Los Day Trippers (Latin Fusion).

**Saturday Market** 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Fresh produce, hot food, local crafts. Through Oct. 26.

**Movie Night** Friday, 7-9 p.m. Oct. 4: "Wonka."

**MoCA on the Move Fall Art Series** Thursdays, 4:30-6:30 p.m. Through Oct. 24. All skill levels welcome to work with artists. Details [here](#).

**MoCA on the Move Fall Fun Family Series** Sundays, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Live music, hands-on art.

## What's doing at Water Park

Here are events this month at [Water Park](#), 1601 Crystal Drive:

**Strong Start Saturdays** 8-10 a.m. Two free 45-minute classes with a trainer. Bring water and a yoga mat.

**Fall Concert Series.** Oct. 4, 5-8 p.m.: Gordon Sterling & The People; Oct. 5, 5:30-8:30 p.m.: Ms Cross & Friends; Oct. 11, 5-8 p.m.: Gracie Jay; Oct. 25, 5-8 p.m.: Bryan Lee.

## Colada Shop adds to Grace & Reva dining scene

The [Colada Shop](#) has opened at 244 19<sup>th</sup> Ct. on the ground floor of JBG Smith's new Grace and Reva apartment complex. The Cuban café and bar joins the [VanLeeuwen Ice Cream](#), and the planned French Bistro-inspired [Bar Colline](#).

In other dining news:

[Arlington Magazine](#) offers a culinary tour of National Landing, with capsule reviews of more than 30 eateries ranging from Water Park kiosks to full-scale restaurants.

[Surreal](#) 2117 Crystal Drive. First 50 croissants free each morning at 8 a.m.

[Good Company Donuts & Café](#) 1350 South Eads St. Half off Wednesdays on bottles of wine.

[Rasa Happy Hour](#) 2200 Crystal Drive. Offers \$4 beer, and \$5 wines and cocktails weekdays, 3-7 p.m.

## For more activities ...

- [Events at National Landing](#)
- [Arlington Parks and Recreation](#)
- [Arlington arts events](#)
- [Arlington Convention and Visitors Services](#)

## ABOUT CCCA

The Crystal City Civic Association (CCCA) was formed on January 28, 2014. We are a non-partisan, not-for-profit organization with the express purpose of advancing the common interests of the residents of the Crystal City neighborhood in Arlington County, Virginia. CCCA gives a voice to our residents. CCCA officers represent community members at county meetings, function as liaisons to state and local lawmakers, coordinate with the Crystal City BID on important issues and projects and ensures the needs of residents are met.

### CRYSTAL CITY CIVIC ASSOCIATION BOARD

**President** Eric Cassel

**Vice President** Tarsi Dunlop

**Meeting Secretary** Sheryl Eaton

**Communications Director** Jay Ahuja

**Membership Liaison** Vacant

**Treasurer** Steve Miller

Join on our website:

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OR

Send a check for \$10 to:

Steve Miller

Treasurer, CCCA

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