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NEWS

Building an Art Community

Affordable artist housing could be on the horizon for Arlington County.

BY MICHAEL DALDERSTON

NO ONE IS looking to build a baseball field out of a cornfield, but Arlington County is hoping that if they build it, they will come. The “it” in this case is affordable artist housing, the “they”—inherently—would be the artists. That’s what is largely behind the work of Arlington and the nonprofit Artspace, that works with communities to create affordable places for artists to live and work.

The conversation of establishing affordable housing for area artists began in earnest in 2016, when representatives from the Pappas Trust got in touch with Arlington’s Public Arts Director Angela Adams about developing an art project on 23rd Street in Crystal City. When word of this got to Michelle Isabelle-Stark, the cultural affairs

division chief for the county, she remembered her previous experience working with Artspace on a project on Long Island, New York. “The village now is so lively,” says Isabelle-Stark, and she saw similarities between that project and Arlington.

The Arlington Foundation for Arts and Innovation is leading the project, with funding support from the Pappas Trust and help with community engagement coming from Arlington and Isabelle-Stark’s office. Artspace, meanwhile, has been providing its services to help determine the community interest and feasibility of such a project.

To do so, Artspace came down to Arlington in February 2017 to inspect four potential sites and hold focus groups with community members. The four sites were Crystal City, Virginia Square, Columbia Pike and Four Mile Run. Any future project is not limited to those four sites, but those were the sites the county identified to Artspace to determine if Arlington was capable of such a project. After the two-day visit, Artspace took the information gathered to write out a full report on whether or not they should move forward.

“Arlington was a place we were pretty excited to come back [to] and tell them, ‘We think there is something more here that we’d like to study and really get at the heart of these sectors,’” says Stacey Mickelson, vice president of advancement and government relations with Artspace. The next step was a survey that was opened to anyone within 50 miles of Arlington and that closed in mid-May.

“The numbers prove out what our hunch was,” says Mickelson, “and that is at least one space, one artist live/work space, could be supported and probably an artist’s working studio building with no residential that would just be a place for artists to work.”

Some of the specific findings indicated that if such affordable hous-

ing was available a number of people would consider moving into Arlington. Isabelle-Stark believes that many of these responses came from people who live in surrounding areas of Arlington and may work in Arlington, but can’t afford to live there at the moment. This is slightly unusual, according to Mickelson. Typically, the people who are most interested in these types of spaces already live in the area that is being looked at. “This is people that we touched in our survey who don’t live in Arlington who are excited about Arlington and are excited about the opportunity to live and work in Arlington,” Mickelson details.

Another unique result from the survey was the response to theater. Many of the respondents were interested in how these spaces could be used by those in the performing arts, more than visual arts, which Mickelson says is usually the art form that draws the most interest.

The survey did its job and showed that artists in the area would be intrigued by the opportunity, but before they can pack up their paints and easels there are still a number of details that need to be worked out. Notably, an official location must be

selected. In addition to the four sites that were originally considered, it is expected that other sites will throw their name into the ring now that things are progressing.

Artspace says that it expects to send another batch of representatives to Arlington in late summer or fall to begin what it calls its “quiet phase,” six to eight months of research to determine the best possible location based on factors like available land, funding opportunities, parking, Metro and other services.

If—though there is high interest from all parties, nothing is set in stone—and when Artspace chooses to set up shop somewhere in Arlington, it’s set to be a figure in Arlington’s art community for years to come. Mickelson says these spaces sign agreements that will keep them providing affordable housing for 50-plus years.

Artspace has more than 50 such developments across the country, including two in the area in Brooklands in the District and Mount Rainer, Maryland, with a third coming to Silver Spring, Maryland. A fourth could make the Metro-D.C. area the new hotbed for artists in the Mid-Atlantic.

HASHTAG
NOVA
by Libby Burns



“It’s a subscription box of other subscription boxes.”

NOVA
news

The Potomac Nationals are moving to Fredericksburg with an opening day in a new stadium scheduled for April 2020. The owner of the team, Art Silber, signed a letter of intent for a stadium that will cost \$35 million. **The Washington Redskins have announced something new: there is no longer a waitlist for season tickets.** A spokesman for the team said it is to increase the fan experience and did not mention a decline in demand. The team is also lowering the price of food items for ticket holders as well as more access to off-season events. **Kaiser Permanente is expanding in Northern Virginia with the opening of two new locations,** one in Haymarket, opening late 2019, and the other on the campus of Stafford Hospital, opening summer of 2019. The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services announced that **the winter loss of 59.5 percent of honeybee colonies was greater than the expected 30 percent.** Mark Lerner has taken the helm of the Washington Nationals as his father, **Ted Lerner, passed over the reins of ownership.** Local station **ABC7/WJLA-TV has launched TrafficWatch7,** a crowd-sourced traffic app.

DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

All Krieger Sports Complex opens

Almost three years after the groundbreaking, the All Krieger Sports Complex, a 29.7 acre facility adjacent to St. John Paul the Great High School in Dumfries, opened in June and brings the area a space that holds seven multi-purpose fields, a softball field, tot lot and more. The facility, named after the Prince William native, 2016 Olympian and 2015 Women’s World Cup championship team member, will also host the All Krieger Football Camps for youth and adults to further their soccer skills.

Nook playspace doubles down with two new spaces opening this year

Nook, a play and learning space outfitted in minimalist decor with the new family in mind, is expanding, just having opened a space in Mosaic and another one coming to Ballston Quarter this fall. Nook is a space for children, infants to 5 years old, to explore art, building, reading and more with their parent or caregiver and have many programs that rotate throughout the year. They also host parent workshops such as birthing classes, pre and postnatal yoga along with potty training and playful parenting.

Alamo Draffhouse debuts in Woodbridge

Already a staple in One Loudoun, Alamo Draffhouse recently opened their second location in Northern Virginia at Stonebridge at Potomac Town Center in Woodbridge. The theater holds eight screen and dine-in options, and has the company’s first large-format auditorium with 256 recliner seats and state-of-the-art laser projection system.

Rosslyn gets a Convene coworking space

Rosslyn’s transformation continues to move along with Convene, a coworking space, moving in below the CEB Observation Deck (see pg. 12) that will offer a space for up to 300 people to take advantage of the panoramic views while they work or meet.

I-66 goes to triple lanes inside the Beltway

For decades, area residents have been sitting in traffic on I-66 with little future hope of alleviating this pain. But in June, hope came in the form of the beginning of building a third lane to the interstate inside the Beltway. The project is expected to take more than two years and will add a third lane eastbound for four miles between the Dulles Connector Road and Fairfax Drive, plus the project will add a bridge for the WSOD Trail over Lee Highway and connect two existing ramps at the Route 7 interchange allowing for direct access from eastbound I-66 to the West Falls Church Metro station.