

# Preservation Arlington

*Protecting and Promoting Arlington's Unique Character*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 5, 2017

## ARLINGTON COUNTY'S MOST ENDANGERED HISTORIC PLACES LIST 2017

### "Losing our History"

#### **1000-Series Metro Cars**

Out of Arlington's 11 Metro stations, six of them opened within Metro's first 15 months of operation that began in 1976 and all but one were open by the time the system turned three. When the first stations opened, Arlington County's population was approximately 156,000 (compared to over 230,000 today). Arlington County had made a conscious decision to focus high density development in the transit corridors. Arlington has grown up along with the Metro system. Metro's development and success has been at the core of Arlington's success.

Metro's original mod off-white and orange 1000-series cars are among its most iconic images. The interiors reflected the height of fashionable interior design in the 1970s. The original order of 300 cars were refurbished and slightly modified in 1993. In June 2017, Metro announced that the 1000-series cars would all be out of service by July 2017 after having faithfully served for over 41 years. In addition, all 4000-series cars, which also carry the orange design, are being retired. These are all being replaced by the new modern 7000-series vehicles -- with LED lighting, rubber carpeting, and seats that are not orange. Metro plans to refurbish and preserve cars Number 1000 and 1001. The National Capital Trolley Museum has already indicated they cannot take this pair of cars, so an opportunity exists for Arlington to find a place for these cars to be shown and visited, since they played such an important role in our County's growth. After all, a Metro train car was on display at the Kann's parking lot (now GMU Law School) to gather support for the Metro bonds.

#### **Arlington Education Center**

Completed in 1969, the Education Center and Planetarium were designed in the style known as New Formalism by the Cleveland firm of Ward & Schneider, which also designed Key School and an addition to Swanson Middle School. In 1967, the American Association of School Administrators recognized the design with a special citation: *"An imposing design for county educational headquarters which should attract the public and focus attention on the importance of education, its interior spaces are carefully designed to serve the unique requirements of staff, and the public."*

Recently the demolition of the Education Center has been discussed to allow for the construction of a new school building. However, the Arlington County School Board voted to keep the building and pursue a renovation and adaptive reuse of the building for roughly 600 high school students. The Board has requested staff provide them with high, medium and low-cost alternatives. While some exterior improvements will be necessary it is hoped that this will be minimal and will not alter the appearance of the historic structure. Designed as a headquarters building to show the strength and commitment to education, the building is iconic in our community.

#### **Community Buildings**

Privately owned community buildings are disappearing from our landscape. Often built on the edge of neighborhood business districts or on land large enough to accommodate parking lots, these sites are often now being targeted for more valuable uses. At risk are the churches and service organization buildings, whose congregations and constituents have decreased in size but want to continue their missions here in Arlington, but in newer space. Five churches have been demolished or are slated for demolition and several others are beginning the process. Masonic Lodges and Legion Halls have moved or consolidated. Even the Red Cross has sold their well-known property along Arlington Boulevard. These buildings contribute to the visual landscape of the county, from the cannon outside the legion hall, or the iconic Red Cross on that building, or the spires and architectural detail of churches. These features were designed to attract attention and represent "place" in our community and steps should be taken to reuse and retain them.

### **Custis Memorial Parkway**

The Custis Memorial Parkway, more commonly known as I-66, is the result of a compromise reached by Arlington residents to minimize the road's impacts on the community. Originally proposed to be six to eight lanes of traffic with multiple entry and exit points, the resulting compromise reduced the roadway to four total lanes, eliminated trucks, reduced the number of on- and off-ramps, instituted HOV access, reserved a section for Metro rail, and created a linear "buffer" park with a bike bath--the Custis Trail. Opened in December 1982, it is the U.S. Interstate System's only landscaped parkway. Retaining walls, bridges, guardrails, lights, and the other typical highway infrastructure were designed to a higher standard and created a multi-hued earth-toned appearance.

Since last year, a series of improvements as part of the "Transform 66" initiative are now undermining the roadway's unique parkway design. Plantings are no longer maintained. Corten steel guardrails and sign supports are being replaced with standard, steel interstate highway components. The new toll road gantries, and large, new sign supports (and highway signage) on nearby arterial roads have further eroded the parkway's ability to blend into its surroundings. Several civic groups have met with Arlington and VDOT to discuss the highly obtrusive signage that has been installed on Lee Highway and Washington Boulevard. The Custis Memorial Parkway is beginning to look much more like a typical interstate highway and is losing its unique connection to our community.

### **Four Mile Run Industrial Area**

Plans are under way to upgrade parkland in and around Four Mile Run in South Arlington, now home to several longstanding businesses such as the iconic Weenie Beenie and important services including the Arlington Food Assistance Center, bus parking, and the very important WETA's studios. Parkland is essential in Arlington, but the hope is for a balanced outcome that protects established and necessary support businesses in this industrial corridor while upgrading and expanding parks in a creative way. A citizen working group has been convened to discuss this proposal and how it would affect Arlington County's only remaining light industrial area.

### **Pre-World War II Housing Stock**

Since 2009, over 1,050 single family homes have been demolished in Arlington County -- a number which does not reflect "major renovations". The homes from the first part of the century represent Arlington's history as a trolley suburb and a affordable home ownership. Some of these homes were purchased from the Sears kit-house catalog, or other manufacturers or entrepreneurs copied those designs and built their own homes. Arlington's only locally designated historic district -- Maywood -- is a shining example of the architectural history of our community but also how careful reinvestment can maintain the past while still allowing homes to be modernized. Meanwhile in neighboring Cherrydale and Lyon Village, homes are coming down every month.

The continued loss of these houses is erasing Arlington's architectural and community history. The County needs to provide stronger leadership for establishing locally designated historic districts in order to preserve our past while embracing the future.

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