



SPRING 2022

TAKE NOTICE

North Old Town Independent Civic Association Newsletter

Dear Neighbors

BY MACE CARPENTER, PRESIDENT

There are few nicer places to be than Old Town North. Our area is a great place to live and work. We look forward to warmer weather and a beautiful Alexandrian spring. As you are aware, there is a lot of development in our neighborhood. Your NOTICE board is engaged, but we could use your support to work with developers, coordinate with other civic groups, and discuss issues with the city. Among areas that are being planned for development are 901 North Pitt Street, Trans-Potomac Plaza, Montgomery Center, and the power plant. The Old Town North Small Area Plan forecast a population of 7700 in 2040. However, within a few years, our population could jump from ~5000 citizens to over 12,000. If we are to expand successfully, we need your support to help ensure our parks, arts facilities, transportation, open space, infrastructure, parking, and support facilities develop as well.

Please keep safe and healthy. COVID cases are on the decline, but the disease would rear its ugly head again. Simple action such as washing hands, testing, and quickly reporting illnesses will help prevent another round of pandemic.

Florals for Spring

Spring is finally returning to Old Town North, despite a little mid-March snow!

Board Member Eleanor Quigley, who also serves on the Alexandria Beautification Committee, has provided a wonderful article on spring florals on page 4.

In addition to the article, many of the nature images found throughout this newsletter were provided by Eleanor from around OTN and Alexandria from Spring 2021.

Did you find some signs of Spring on your neighborhood walks? Share them with NOTICE and your neighbors by emailing them to us or tagging us in the image on Facebook.

Creating our Neighborhood Vibe: A Featured Local Business

BY MACE CARPENTER, BOARD PRESIDENT

We are blessed in Old Town North with a top-notch bike shop, Wheel Nuts. Not only do they sell and rent wonderful bicycles, but they also expertly service them.

I brought my bicycle to another shop and was told I needed expensive new parts. When I took the bike to Wheel Nuts, they quickly repaired it without replacing with any new parts.

One customer noted, “Excellent friendly service and reasonable prices. Wife got a flat tire out on a Sunday bike ride. All seemed lost, but Wheel Nuts Bike Shop saved the day with a quick repair. Five Stars, highly recommended.”

Another reviewed added, “Very friendly and helpful staff. I rented there and rode the trail to Mount Vernon. You get a helmet, cycle lock, spare tire, repair kit and pump included.”

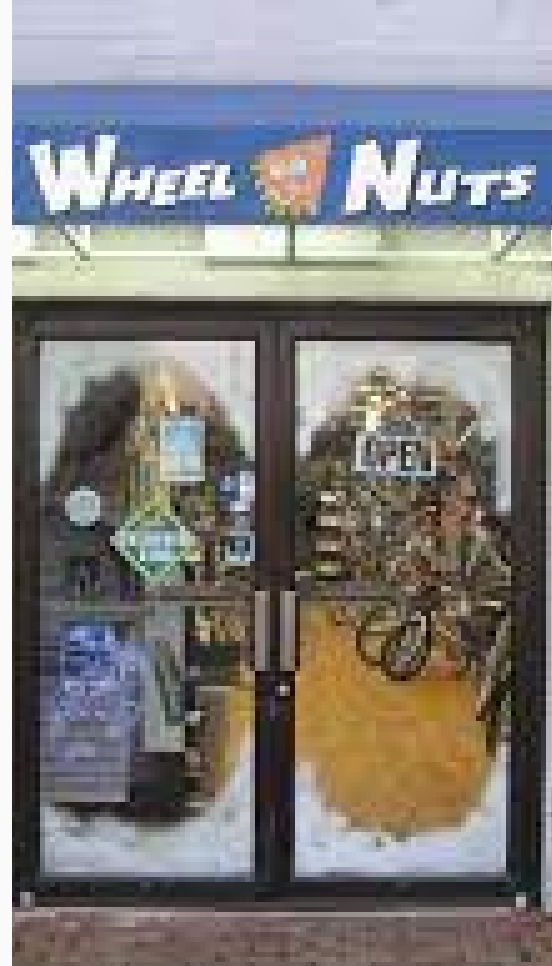
As the Montgomery Center closes for development in June of 2023, I truly hope Wheel Nuts will relocate to another Old Town North location. It is a great shop with great people.



Wheel Nuts
Bike Shop
302 Montgomery St

M-F 11AM - 7PM
Sat 9AM - 6PM
Sun 10AM - 5PM

www.wheelnutsbikeshop.com





HOA Spotlight: Watergate of Alexandria

BY TOM SOAPES, WATERGATE BOARD PRESIDENT
PHOTOS PROVIDED BY PENNY LAPORTE

Watergate of Alexandria Condominium, constructed in 1977-79, sits between North Pitt and North Royal Streets and south of Second Street. In the 1970s, city leaders saw North Old Town as an area ripe for high-density, high-rise residential development, starting with the Alexandria House and Port Royal.

Watergate, which had been the site of a school and is near the site of the Georgetown Canal, did not follow that plan. The one hundred two- and three-story townhomes of Watergate feature a unique, medium-density design. In addition to the varying heights, some units are arranged in short rows, some are duplexes, some are triplexes, and two units are free-standing. Stucco exteriors and archways interrupt the brick facings. All units have either a ground-level patio or a balcony. Brick walkways connect the townhomes, with substantial open spaces decorated with mature trees, bushes, and shrubs. Some homes open directly to city sidewalks; some open to interior mews settings in the northeast and southern quadrants. A large central mews connects the northern and southern halves of the community. The northern segment focuses on a koi pond surrounded by a quiet seating area and plantings. Two underground garages provide at least one space for each unit, avoiding the distraction of ground-level parking lots.

Watergate's original design called for another set of townhomes on the plot now occupied by the office building at 901 North Pitt and included tennis courts in Montgomery Park. The third set of townhomes was never built because the developer declared bankruptcy, and the tennis courts were deeded to the city when the early owners at Watergate decided not to cover the courts' maintenance costs.

Watergate continues to attract new residents drawn by the growing number of retailers and restaurants in the area, proximity to the bike path and Old Town (King Street is less than a mile to the south), and quick access to Metro and the George Washington Parkway.



Spring Returns to Old Town North

BY ELEANOR QUIGLEY, BOARD MEMBER

When you think spring, do colorful daffodils come to mind? Crocuses and heliotropes, tucked into greenery in Alexandria House Park, are showing color, too. Even more showy will be flowering cherry trees, expected toward the end of March. There are lovely ones just north of the Oronoco condos, along the curvy path leading to the waterfront. Several native trees that feed the insects that nourish baby birds are also colorful in spring-time: flowering dogwoods, eastern redbuds, and sweetbay magnolias. Along with the Virginia fringe tree, they provide sweet fragrances and will begin blooming in April, as will Virginia bluebells and many late blooming, multi-colored tulips.

Transformation is Not New to Old Town History

BY AGNES ARTEMEL, BOARD MEMBER

Change is happening again in OTN and it feels intense. In colonial times we transformed from forest to large expanses of agriculture. Industrial uses began with the Alexandria Canal in the 1830's and river-related activities. Structures here included Black enclaves at Cross Canal, Fishtown, and The Berg.

WWII signaled industrialization on bigger scale: a rail line was built and coal and huge rolls of paper moved from the waterfront to the new power plant and The Washington Post. The Bogle Arsenic Factory, Texaco Tank Farm and Atlantic Research rocket testing were in full swing.

When Alexandria emphasized waterfront renewal in the 1970's, Alexandria House (1975) was built and its self-contained design is emblematic of the then-attitude toward cities. The city sought to keep development away from what became Founders Park, traded land with the developer and Watergate of Alexandria (1978) was built on the Ficklin School site. At the end of Montgomery St., where the Old Dominion Glass factory had stood, a tall hotel appeared carrying the Ramada flag. It had great views of the Potomac and later became the Radisson, and then the Crowne Plaza. It will soon open as Venue condominiums. South and north of the hotel, the riverfront changed with United Way (1975), TransPotomac Plaza (a 5 building office complex of the early 1980's), and Sheet Metal Workers building (1987) that became The Oronoco condos (2013). They were the commercial backbone of OTN.

In 1976 the movie theater on First St. closed and made way for the Holiday Inn that will soon be transformed. A cafeteria/diner on Washington St. came down to make room for the Armed Forces Benefit Association building. And the famed Roller Rink was demolished in favor of the Sheraton Suites complex.

By the 1990's residential development was encouraged by the improved commercial properties. When Norton Rendering Plant ceased operation, Rivergate (1994) was built on what was to be office space. Then came Hearthstone Mews, Pitt St. Station, Portners Landing, Liberty Row, Chatham Square, Abingdon Row and Printers Row. And now... we have a burst of dramatic changes that will raise the skyline, provide more retail and arts uses, more amenities for residents, and hopefully a better quality of life for all.

Old Town North Springs into Action

BY MARGARET TOWNSEND, BOARD MEMBER

This April the Old Town North Community Partnership and its Community Business Members will be participating in the annual Act for Alexandria Spring 2 Action on April 27th. The annual event provides an opportunity for all who live, work or own businesses in Alexandria to embrace the act of philanthropy and support neighbors, both two- and four-legged, in need.

The philanthropic bug has already bitten several of our local businesses. In Fall 2021 River's Edge Yoga hosted a benefit yoga class in Montgomery Park in support of relief efforts for Afghan refugees. Chewish Deli donated a percentage of profits to King Street Cats and vendors at the Old Town North Farmer's have been donating profits to the work of World Central Kitchen helping to feed Ukrainian refugees at the Polish boarder.

All sales of Coffee by the Cup at the Sunday Market will continue to benefit World Central Kitchen through the month of March, and on a more local level, several of the vendors at the Market, including Matt Gitlin of Brutto Breads and David Argento will be sharing with local not for profits through local gleaning efforts.

The Spring 2 Action Campaign allows all within the City to support local not-for-profits through a coordinated campaign of giving on April 27th and in the two weeks leading up to April 27th.

Local businesses will share the word with their employees, customers, friends and neighbors, building enthusiasm and raising funds through word of mouth, special events and donation of profits.

Learn more about Act for Alexandria and the not-for-profits supported through the Annual Day of Giving at www.spring2action.org Learn more about local Old Town North businesses and their efforts to support neighbors in need or to volunteer to help with outreach efforts www.oldtownnorth.org.

