

# Arlington Forest Citizens Association

## Vision Statement for Lubber Run Community Center

January 30, 2014

As Arlington Forest celebrates the historic milestone of its 75th anniversary this year, the Arlington Forest Citizens Association (AFCA) is taking this opportunity to develop a vision for our community that we hope will serve us for decades to come. An essential component of this vision includes our treasured, but outdated Lubber Run Community Center and its environs, including its open spaces, playground and outdoor recreation facilities. These amenities serve not only AFCA, but also the Buckingham neighborhood, the Barrett School community and other surrounding Ballston-area neighborhoods.

The need to preserve the dwindling amount of green space in central Arlington has never been greater. As Arlington has become a national model for smart growth, its desirability as a place to live, work and play has skyrocketed. In the Ballston area alone within a one-half mile radius of the Lubber Run Recreation Center, about 1,680 new housing units have been built in the last 20 years – the equivalent of two additional Arlington Forest sized neighborhoods. Even more units are under construction or have been approved. With these changes have come wonderful amenities, but the tremendous increase in density has also significantly reduced open space, increased congestion and negatively impacted quality of life.

AFCA believes that the Lubber Run Community Center (LRCC) has a critical role to play in preserving a green, urban oasis to serve the recreational, social and educational needs of an expanding, diverse and vibrant population in central Arlington. With the increase in density and the thousands of new residents in the Ballston area, the demand for recreation and outdoor amenities will continue to rise. This view is shared by Arlington County in its 2013-2022 Capital Improvement Plan that includes replacement of the aging LRCC to “meet the needs of our growing community. . . .and provide a full complement of recreational, social and learning activities for all ages.”

This vision statement identifies AFCA's priorities for the Lubber Run Community Center with the hopes that it will begin a larger community conversation with the many stakeholders who have an interest in its future.

### **Guiding Principles for the Lubber Run Community Center:**

➡ **Preserve the character of Arlington Forest, an historic district on the National Register.** The LRCC has been a vital part of Arlington Forest's history and continues to be central to neighborhood celebrations and community events. In keeping with Arlington Forest's historic district status on the National Register, a new LRCC should be designed to conform to the existing character of the neighborhood.

➡ **Adhere to AFCA's approved Neighborhood Conservation Plan.** AFCA strongly supports following the County Board-approved Neighborhood Conservation Plan, which states, "The indoor and outdoor recreational facilities at the Lubber Run Center and Barrett School grounds are heavily used by Arlington Forest residents and people from all over the County." The Plan recommends that, "The County should maintain the Center as a general community use facility under the auspices of the DPR." (Department of Parks and Recreation)

➡ **Preserve LRCC's park-like setting and maintain all current green and outdoor recreation space.** Preservation of green space and minimization of impervious surface is essential for a redesigned LRCC. A new Center should not impact the County-designated Resource Conservation area of Lubber Run, should not increase air, water or noise pollution; nor should it increase traffic on residential streets or exacerbate current already heavy demand for on-street parking from commuters and nearby apartment residents.

➡ **Ensure that a compatible low-rise structure replaces current Center.** AFCA supports the County's smart growth philosophy of step-down development from the Metro corridor --- high rise, high density along the corridor, stepping down to low rise, single-family homes. AFCA strongly opposes a multiple-story, large footprint building on the LRCC site that does not adhere to this philosophy and brings Ballston corridor-style development directly into the heart of a single-family home neighborhood.

➡ **Continue the tradition of using LRCC to supplement Barrett School resources.** The LRCC is essential to the Barrett School community. The Center and outdoor space are used for after school care and activities, class projects and activities and summer camps. Because of overcrowding at Barrett, the LRCC parking lot is used for overflow parking for staff and parents. Although AFCA does not support a full size elementary school on the LRCC property due to lack of space, AFCA does support further investigation of options for a new LRCC to continue to further support the overcrowded school.

➡ **Create a new Center that uses the existing resources of the surrounding community.** A new LRCC has the unique opportunity to generate a synergy using Barrett School, Lubber Run Park, the Lubber Run Amphitheater and Culpepper Gardens Senior Center. AFCA supports a visioning process for the new LRCC that would creatively address the community needs of the greater Ballston community through a partnership with the Buckingham Community Civic Association, area tenant associations, Parks and Recreation, community groups currently using the facility, the Barrett school community, nearby civic associations and other stakeholders.