

THE DESTRUCTION OF STRAWBERRY RUN

What it means to you

You may have heard the City of Alexandria plans to cut down hundreds of trees and destroy the habitat at Taylor Run in the name of “stream restoration”. However, you should also know that the City is planning a similar destructive project for Strawberry Run (the stream and woods along lower Ft. Williams Parkway).

The City currently plans to move forward with a “stream restoration” project at Strawberry Run that will bring heavy construction equipment, scores of construction workers, traffic and major noise and pollution daily from 7am-5pm, 6 days a week for the next 1.5 years.

The City plans to make Dearborn Place a staging and parking area and we expect that Trinity Drive, Sylvan Court, Tupelo Place, Fort Worth Avenue, as well as Taft Avenue and lower Ft. Williams Parkway, will handle overflow traffic and parking. Aside from the disruption, pollution, noise, dust and traffic and unwelcome guests for an extended period of time, this project will destroy the tree canopy and permanently impact the environment in our neighborhood.

We learned through FOIA that this project is already costing more than \$1M annually in City staff time (not including contractors) and will cost taxpayers \$1.6M in city and state funds. Worst of all, we have learned that the Strawberry Run “stream restoration” is not necessary; additionally, independent experts have stated that this project will do irreparable harm to the habitat and ecology of Strawberry Run.

The City has failed to answer even basic questions about the project, such as:

What tests have been done to show that this project will reduce sediment, phosphorus and nitrogen that is allegedly running into the Chesapeake Bay from Strawberry Run?

- The City applied for the matching grant for this project based upon a model and has not demonstrated that this project will improve water quality in the Chesapeake Bay. In fact, an independent analysis has shown there is very little sediment, phosphorus or nitrogen present in Strawberry Run. Moreover, independent experts note that the “natural channel design” stream restoration approach the City intends to use could actually create more water quality problems than it will solve.
- Sadly, we have learned that this project has little to do with water quality in Strawberry Run or in the Chesapeake; rather, the destruction of Strawberry Run is more about “pollution credits” the City will use to support further urban development.

What alternatives to the “natural channel design” methodology and heavy construction could be used to achieve the City’s objectives?

- The City has explored no alternatives to the current plan, which was recommended by a paid industry consultant.
- Independent experts have strongly urged the City to explore alternatives, noting that the “natural channel design” approach to stream restoration will not likely work at Taylor Run/Strawberry Run and the damage to the environment may be irreparable.

What assurances can the City provide that this project will succeed and that this project will not cause more harm than good to the environment and the neighborhood?

- An earlier natural channel design project on the southern portion of Strawberry Run completed in 2010 has failed and despite expert advice, the City is determined to apply the same methodology to the northern end of Strawberry Run.
- The City has refused to do any environmental impact study and has not provided any expert evidence in response to concerns expressed about an increase in the population of dangerous disease carrying mosquitoes in our neighborhood as a result of this project.

Most disturbing is that we have learned that the plan for Strawberry Run was approved by the City Council, based upon a letter dated September 28, 2018 from the City Manager, in which he falsely stated and blatantly misrepresented that the City had contacted and met with impacted residents and neighbors. No such contact or meetings occurred prior to September 2018 or before a “public meeting” held in November 2019.

WE NEED YOUR HELP... *please contact the City with your concerns*

The Seminary Ridge Civic Association and Strawberry Hill Civic Association have been working together to gather facts and provide input to the City. The Associations are asking for a one year delay in this project to obtain more facts and explore alternatives. Importantly, they have been assured by the state (also confirmed by the City) that a one year delay will not jeopardize the state matching grant nor unduly disrupt the project, should it proceed.

Now it is up to us. The City is currently accepting comments from concerned residents about this project. We urge you to register your views on this project on the City website: <https://www.research.net/r/AlexandriaVA-StrawberryRunStream> **no later than January 31, 2021.** You may also send your comments to the Mayor and City Council directly @ <https://alex311.alexandriava.gov/customer/request/CTYCNCL/details>.

We hope you will join with us in asking the City to stop this project (for at least a year) so we may fully understand this project, the impact on our neighborhood and the possibility of viable alternatives to “natural channel design” for Strawberry Run.

For more information, you can access the City website at: <https://www.alexandriava.gov/tes/stormwater/info/default.aspx?id=118208> If you would like to review the correspondence your civic associations have submitted to the City on Strawberry Run or need assistance with talking points, please contact Fran Vogel @ fran.vogel@verizon.net or (703) 517-0759 or Lyn Allen @ lynallen146@gmail.com or (208) 290-7895.