

LYON PARK HISTORY

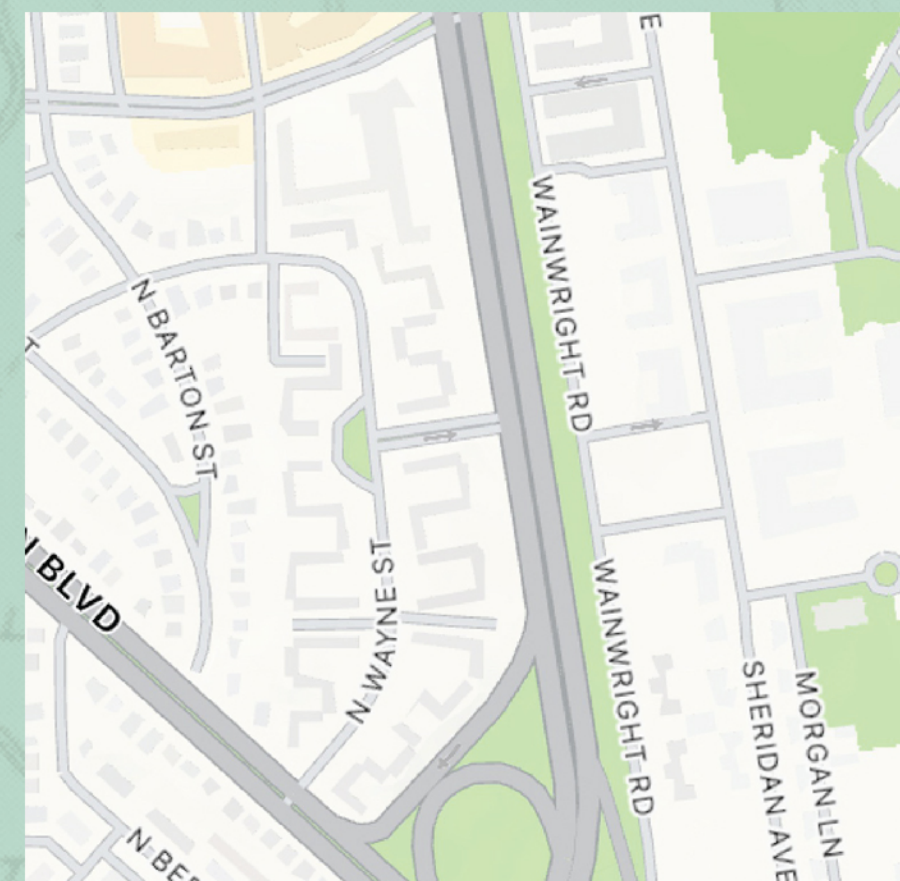


The Anacostan People

Prior to the arrival of Europeans in 1607, the land now called Lyon Park was home to Indigenous people. The Anacostan tribe, associated with the Piscataway tribe, lived along the Potomac River, where they farmed, hunted and fished. The forested land was home to deer, bear, turkeys and other woodland animals. When the European colonists came, they encroached on tribal lands and brought diseases with them that decimated Indigenous populations. By 1700, the few remaining Anacostans left the area, likely merging with other tribes.

Early Settlement

From 1729 until around 1900, the land comprising Lyon Park was owned by the Birch family. For a brief period during the Civil War, Fort Tillinghast stood at the edge of Lyon Park, part of the Union Army's line of defense protecting Washington, DC. Near US Route 50 and 2nd Street North, there is a historical marker that commemorates its location. In the early 1900s the land was sold to Robert Moore, who partnered with Frank Lyon to develop the area.



FORT TILLINGHAST – THEN & NOW

(courtesy of the Arlington Historical Society)

Lyon Park Development

In 1919, Lyon & Fitch subdivided the first portion of a 300-acre tract to establish Lyon Park, currently bounded by Arlington Blvd, N. Irving Street, 10th Street N. and Washington Blvd. The sales brochure extolled the “limited number of building lots and villa sites. Its area embraces lands suitable for the development of individual taste.” Its proximity to the Clarendon station of the Washington and Old Dominion Railway made it easier for property owners and local builders to utilize house construction kits from Sears & Roebuck, and other catalog companies, that arrived via the U.S. Mail. Lyon Park also is edged with multi-family brick apartment buildings, reflecting the Garden City Movement. They were built in the 1940s due to the influx of government workers leading up to and during World War II. Restrictive deed covenants on some properties prevented non-Caucasians from owning or renting homes. These covenants, common in the region in the first half of the 20th century, were deemed unenforceable in 1948 and were outlawed by the Fair Housing Act of 1968.



Lyon Park Community House

The Lyon Park Community House and surrounding parkland is unique within Arlington, as both are owned and managed by the community itself. The building was constructed in 1925 and underwent a complete renovation in 2014, in both instances relying on funds raised within the community. The updated building is now fully accessible and features a bright sunroom addition and modern amenities. As the building passed the century mark in 2025, the community came together to interpret its collection of documents and artifacts, creating displays and educational narratives in partnership with Arlington County's Historic Preservation Fund.

National Recognition

In 2003, Lyon Park was added to the National Register of Historic Places. As such, it is deemed worthy of preservation for its historical significance, “an excellent example of one of the many residential subdivisions that emerged in Arlington County after the first World War to support the burgeoning population flocking to the nation's capital and its suburbs.”

“Despite the alterations and minor additions that have occurred in Lyon Park, the majority of the features...[and] the setback, massing, scale, and overall feeling of Lyon Park as a suburban neighborhood is significantly intact as envisioned by developer Frank Lyon in the first half of the 20th century.”

-- Lyon Park application for Historic District designation, 2003

While rapid growth threatens to alter the features of Arlington's unique neighborhoods, many residents in Lyon Park remain committed to preserving its character, pedestrian-friendly streets, shade trees and an inviting community center.

WELCOME TO LYON PARK!

For more information about Lyon Park history, go to www.lyonpark.org



LYON PARK HISTORY

The Anacostan People

Prior to the arrival of Europeans in 1497 the land now called Lyon Park was home to indigenous people. The Anacostan tribe associated with the Piscataway tribe lived along the Potomac River, where they farmed, hunted and fished. The forested land was home to deer, bear, turkey and other woodland animals. When the European colonists came, they introduced an iron disease and brought diseases with them that decimated indigenous populations. By 1750, the few remaining Anacostans left the area, likely merging with other tribes.

Early Settlement

From 1753 until around 1900, the land comprising Lyon Park was owned by the Birch family. For a brief period during the Civil War, Fort Tillinghast stood at the edge of Lyon Park, part of the Union Army's line of defense protecting Washington, D.C. Near US Route 50 and 286 Street North, there is a historical marker that commemorates its location. In the early 1900s, the land was sold to Robert Moore, who partnered with Frank Lyon to develop the area.



FORT TILLINGHAST - THEN & NOW
courtesy of the Mt Vernon Historical Society

INDEX SHOWING
INDENTIFIED
PARK AND WASHINGTON

Lyon Park Development

In 1941, Lyon Park subdivided the first portion of a 150-acre tract to establish Lyon Park, currently bounded by Edinger Blvd., Irving Street, Street N, and Washington Blvd. The site, located on the east side of the Potomac River, was developed by the Washington and Old Dominion Railway. The subdivision was for the development of individual lots. The railway made it possible for the development of individual lots. The railway made it possible for the development of individual lots. The railway made it possible for the development of individual lots.



Lyon Park Community House

The Lyon Park Community House and surrounding parcel is unique within Arlington, as both are owned and managed by the community. The building was constructed in 1952 and underwent a complete renovation in 2014. In both instances, the community worked with the Arlington government to ensure the building was restored to its original condition. In 2020, the community came together to support the collection of documents and artifacts relating to the building's history. The collection is currently being displayed and is available for viewing.

National Recognition

In 2021, Lyon Park was added to the National Register of Historic Places. This recognition is a testament to the historical significance of the site and the community's efforts to preserve it. The site is a testament to the historical significance of the site and the community's efforts to preserve it.

Despite the alterations and minor additions that have occurred in Lyon Park, the majority of the features, including the setback, massing, scale, and overall feeling of Lyon Park, as a suburban neighborhood, is significantly intact as envisioned by developer Frank Lyon in the first half of the 20th century.

Lyon Park application for National Register of Historic Places

While rapid growth threatens to alter the historic character of Lyon Park, the community is committed to preserving its historic, suburban feel and ensuring community space.

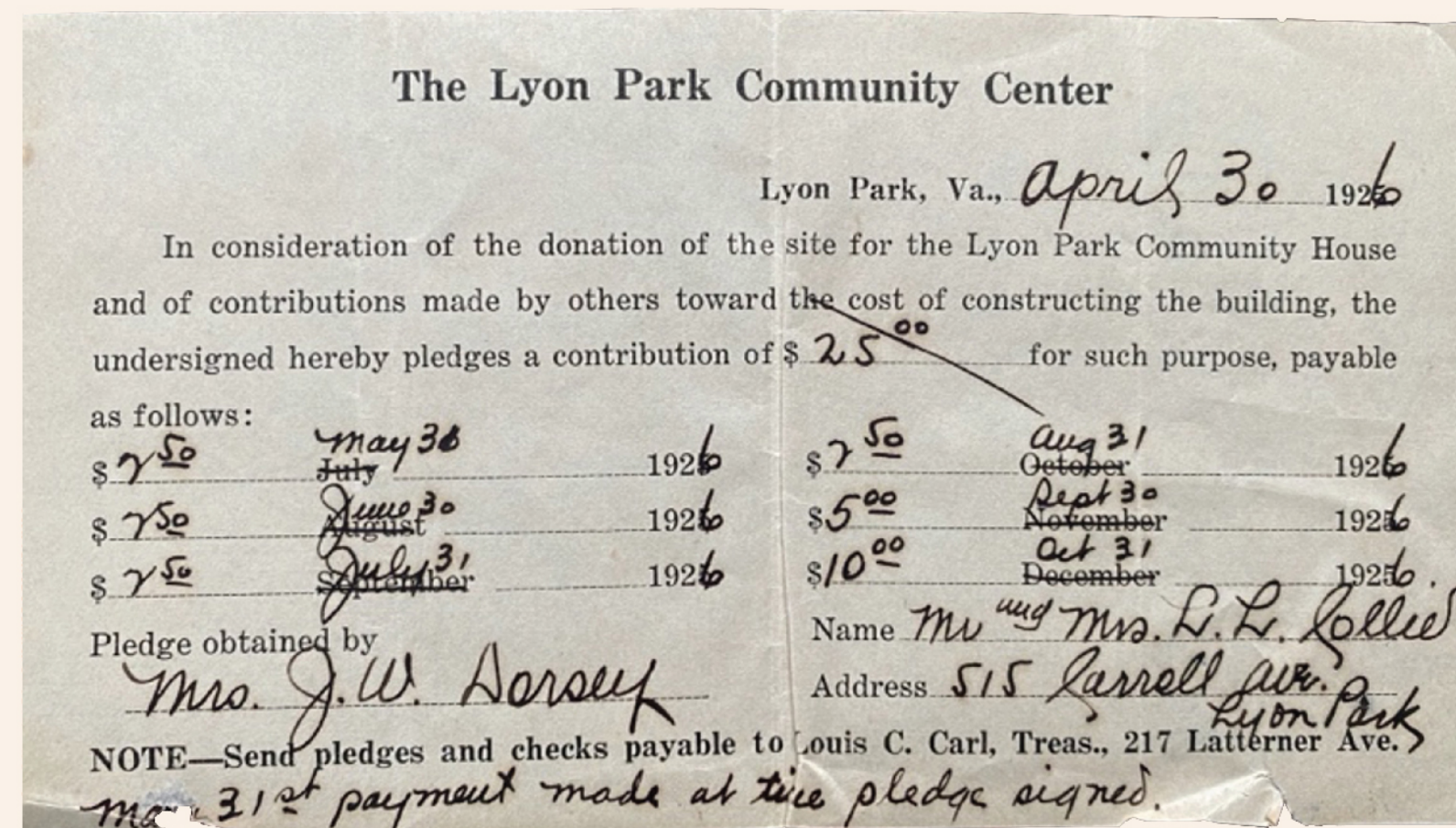
WELCOME TO LYON PARK!
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LYON PARK COMMUNITY CENTER



This park and community center is owned and run by the neighborhood of Lyon Park. The Community House was constructed in 1925 on land donated by the developer, Lyon & Fitch. While many developers established parks for Arlington in the 1920s and 1930s, Lyon Park is the only remaining privately-owned park in the County. Frank Lyon envisioned a community house to encourage robust civic involvement, offering \$2,500 in building funds to be matched by the community. Beginning in 1924, community members voluntarily purchased shares in the Lyon Park Community Center for \$25 each, with monies raised going toward the building fund.



Share Pledge to fund the Lyon Park Community Center Building Fund

Community Supported

The first meeting of the Lyon Park Community Center (LPCC) was held on November 17, 1924, at the offices of Lyon & Fitch. The mission statement of the LPCC was adopted, to build and maintain a Community House that would serve as:

“A social, civic, and recreative center; so democratic as to attract the humblest; so wholesome as to appeal to the exclusive; so broad in scope as to bring youth, maturity, and old age into closer companionship to the benefit of all.”

- LPCC Constitution, adopted June 16, 1925



Winning Raffle Ticket for First Lyon Park Fair, 1925

September 17, 1925, just two months after construction began.

Celebrating Community Amenities

Since 1925, the Lyon Park Community House has played a central role in community and civic life: for dances and theatrical performances, various political and social organization gatherings, monthly Lyon Park Women's Club and Lyon Park Citizens Association meetings, weddings and family celebrations, and for community spaghetti dinners, pancake breakfasts and chili cook-offs. Dance classes and kindergarten programs were also common offerings. During World War II, the Community House supported the war effort, hosting air warden training and Red Cross events.

Expansion and Renovation

In the 1970s, the building was expanded to include a large industrial-style kitchen. Commercial elements were repurposed from the cafeteria of the Henry Clay School (located at the corner of N. Garfield and 7th Street N, now Zitkala-Sa Park) that had recently closed. Several of these elements remain in the kitchen to this day, including the stainless-steel prep island and metal sinks.

By 2000, the Community House was badly in need of repair, with failing plumbing, cramped bathrooms, and structural concerns in the kitchen. In addition, the building did not meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. A complete review of the building's needs was conducted in 2003 and a lengthy community-led process set in motion. Despite initial disagreements, a consensus-based committee developed a design sympathetic to the building's historic features and ADA-compliant. The sunroom addition connects the building's interior to the park and adds much-needed space.

On July 25, 1925, a carnival was held to celebrate the laying of the Community House cornerstone. At the event, a touring car was auctioned off and \$778.69 was raised to complete the building. The carnival is a tradition that continues with the annual Lyon Park Spring Fair. The first community meeting was held in the unfinished building on



The renovated Community House re-opened in 2015. Though the extensive project required a million-dollar loan, neighborhood fundraising and robust building rentals meant the loan was paid off by 2019, just a few months before the global pandemic forced a prolonged closure.

Today the Community Center welcomes thousands of people every year to hundreds of events. Lyon Park residents are proud that what started as a segregated community now embraces diversity. The park and playground offer shaded space for recreation, the kitchen is used by cooks and bakers, and meetings, concerts and parties are held in the main hall, just as envisioned in 1924.

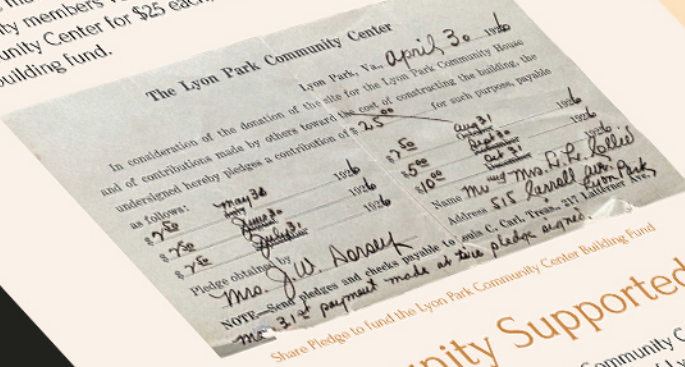


For more information about the Lyon Park Community Center, go to www.lyonpark.org

This project is supported in part by Arlington County Government through the Historic Preservation Program and received public funds from the Arlington County Historic Preservation Fund.

LYON PARK COMMUNITY CENTER

This park and community center is owned and run by the neighborhood of Lyon Park. The Community House was reconstructed in 1925 on land donated by the developer Lyon & Frick. While many developers established parks for Arlington in the 1920s and 1930s, Lyon Park is the only remaining privately owned park in the County. Frank Lyon envisioned a community building to encourage resident civic involvement beginning in 1924. Community members voluntarily purchased shares in the Lyon Park Community Center for \$25 each, with notes raised going toward the building fund.

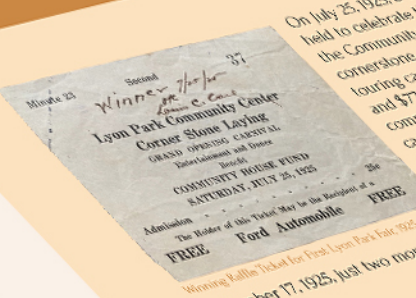


Community Supported

The first meeting of the Lyon Park Community Center (LPC) was held on November 17, 1924 at the offices of Lyon & Frick. The mission statement of the LPC was adopted to build and maintain a Community House that would serve as:

"A social, civic, and recreative center; so democratic as to appeal to the wholesome; so broad in scope as to bring exclusive; so broad in age as to bring youth, maturity and old age into closer companionship to the benefit of all."

- LPC Constitution, adopted June 16, 1925



Celebrating Community Amenities

Since 1925, the Lyon Park Community House has played a central role in community and civic life for dozens of generations. Lyon Park features political and social organizations, athletic teams, and local businesses. The Club and Lyon Park Citizens Association, dance groups, and local clubs offer a wide range of activities and programs. The Community House supports various offerings, including: **Wrestling, Karate, Judo, Taekwondo, and Cross Country.**

Expansion and Renovation

In the 1970s, the building was expanded to include a large industrial-style building. Commercial elements were incorporated into the addition of the new building. The building is located at the corner of N. Carroll and W. Street. It remains in the historic district. Some of the features include the brickwork and the roof.

By 2000 the Community House was badly in need of repair, with leaking plumbing, damaged bathroom, and structural concerns in the kitchen. In addition, the building did not meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). A complete review of the building's needs was conducted in 2000 and a lengthy community-led process led to the development of a renovation plan. The renovation addressed concerns and the park will add much-needed space.



The renovated Community House is expected to be completed in 2025. Through the extensive project, residents will benefit from a new, modern building that will provide a safe and comfortable space for all. The project is a testament to the dedication and hard work of the Lyon Park Community House members and volunteers.

Under the Community Center's vision, the renovation of the park will include a range of amenities, including a new playground, a community garden, and a new library. The project is a testament to the dedication and hard work of the Lyon Park Community House members and volunteers.

For more information about the Lyon Park Community Center, go to www.lyonpark.org



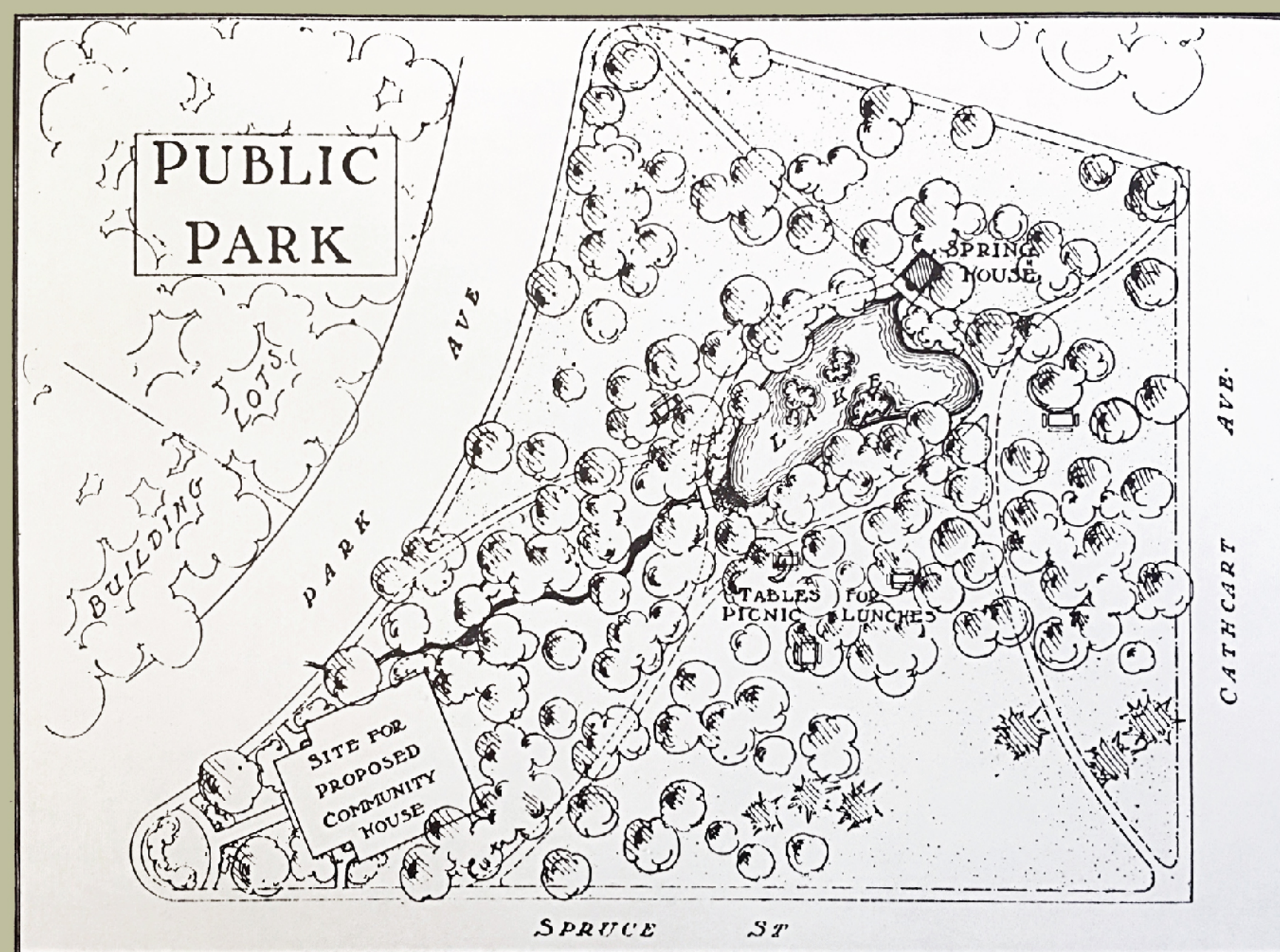
AT THE HEART OF LYON PARK



Established in 1919, the Lyon Park neighborhood centered around 3 acres of parkland at the corner of Spruce Street and Cathcart Avenue (renamed N. Fillmore Street and Pershing Drive in 1934). The 1920 Lyon & Fitch sales brochure describes the area as “a grove of native trees consisting of Elms, Maples, Ash, Tulip trees, Pines, etc. It is traversed by a stream of crystal water from the largest spring in the County.” Though the community house was not yet built, the park included “tables for picnic parties, swings, playground apparatus, and grass and shade for the children.”

While many developers established parks in Arlington in the 1920s and 1930s, Lyon Park is the only remaining privately-owned park in the County. The land was deeded to the Lyon Park Community Center by the developer in 1930 after five years of successful operation of the Lyon Park Community House. Residents volunteer their time to maintain the gardens and trees. Rental income supports community activities and maintenance.

The playground remains a popular feature of the Lyon Park neighborhood, with equipment for toddlers and older children alike. It has been in continuous use since 1925. The community provides equipment upgrades every few decades along with annual maintenance.



Map of Park from 1920 Sales Brochure

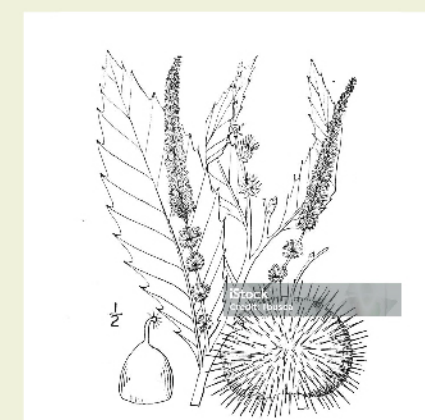


For more information about Lyon Park’s plants and features, go to www.lyonpark.org

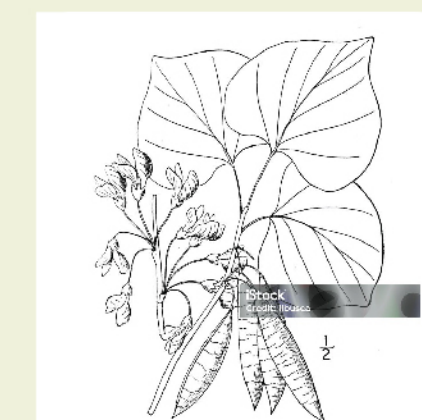
FLORA & FAUNA

Native plants are a good option for Lyon Park gardens. They are naturally adapted to the local conditions, resistant to regional pests and require less fertilizer to thrive.

How many of these native trees can you spot in Lyon Park?



American chestnut (*castanea dentata*)



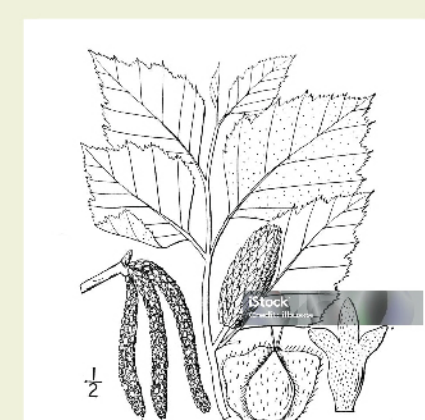
Eastern redbud (*cercis canadensis*)



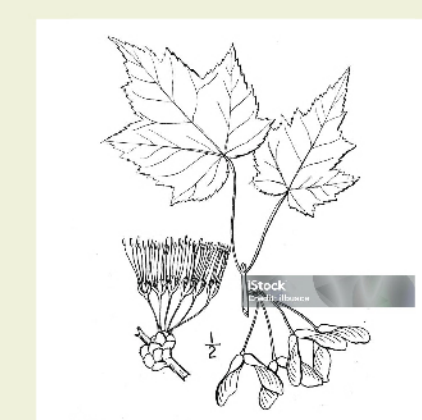
White ash (*fraxinus americana*)



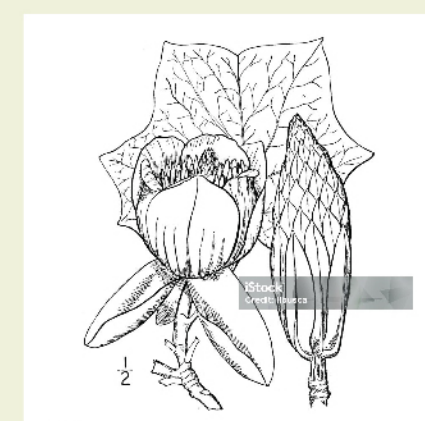
Willow oak (*quercus phellos*)



River birch (*betula nigra*)



Red maple (*acer rubrum*)



Tulip tree (*liriodendron tulipifera*)



Photo of Notable Willow Oak

Can you find these native plants in the garden beds?



Brown-eyed Susan (*rudbeckia triloba*)



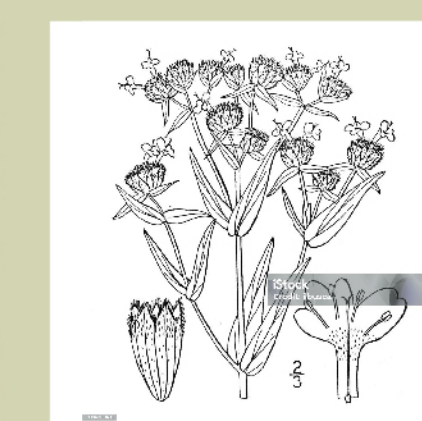
Fragrant Aster (*symphyotrichum oblongifolium*)



Gold and Green (*chrysogonum virginianum*)



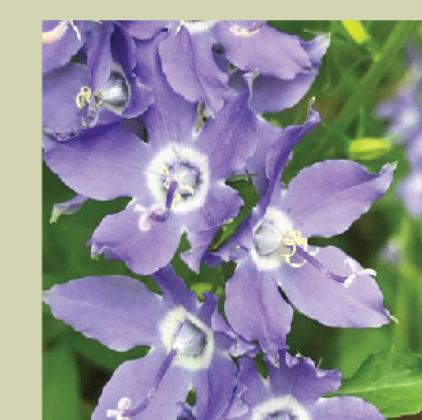
Golden Alexander (*zizia aurea*)



Mountain Mint (*pycnanthemum virginianum*)



Obedient Plant (*physostegia virginiana*)



Tall Bellflower (*campanula americana*)

Return Of The American Chestnut Tree

Once dominating portions of the eastern United States forests, the American chestnut was among the tallest, largest and fastest-growing trees in the Appalachian range. It was nearly wiped out in the first half of the 20th century by a fatal fungal disease known as Chestnut Blight. The chestnut tree is valued for its rot-resistant lumber, nutrient-rich fruit and as a home to wildlife.

In 2021, Lyon Park Citizens Association partnered with the American Chestnut Foundation to bring the American chestnut back to its native habitat, planting several saplings in the southeast corner of the park. The saplings are genetically diverse and disease resistant with the goal they will grow to maturity, provide shade, improve wildlife habitat and produce viable nuts.

AT THE HEART OF LYON PARK



Established in 1909, the Lyon Park neighborhood centered around 2.5 acres of land at the corner of Sycamore Street and Cabarrus Avenue (renamed to Filmore Street and Becking Lane in 1934). The 1920 Lyon & Filmore sales brochure describes the area as a grove of native trees consisting of Elms, Maples, Ash, Tall Yellow Pines, etc. It is traversed by a stream of crystal water from the largest spring in the County. Through the community house was not yet built, the park included tables for picnic, swings, playground apparatus, and grass and shade for the children.

While many developers established parks in Arlington in the 1920s and 1930s, Lyon Park is the only remaining privately owned park in the County. The land was donated to the Lyon Park Community Center by the developer in 1950 after five years of successful operation of the Lyon Park Community House. Residents volunteer their time to maintain the gardens and trees. Rental income supports community activities and maintenance.

The playground remains a popular feature of the Lyon Park neighborhood, with equipment for toddlers and older children alike. It has been in continuous use since 1922. The community provides equipment upgrades every few decades along with annual maintenance.



FLORA & FAUNA

Native plants are a great option for Lyon Park gardens. They are naturally adapted to the local conditions, resistant to insects, pests, and require less maintenance.

How many of these native trees can you spot in Lyon Park?



Can you find these native plants in the garden bed?



Return Of The American Chestnut Tree

Once dominating portions of the eastern United States, the American Chestnut was among the most largest and long-lived trees in the world. It was nearly wiped out by blight in the early 1900s. The 100-year-old Lyon Park Chestnut House is a testament to the tree's resilience and value for its exceptional wood and nut oil.

In 2011, Lyon Park Community Center partnered with the American Chestnut Foundation to bring the tree back to life. The tree is now being planted in the garden bed. The tree's return will provide a valuable resource for the community and its children.



For more information about Lyon Park's plants and features, go to www.lyonpark.org

