

## ATAG TAKES TO THE STREETS FOR TREES

Arlington Tree Action Group (ATAG) organized fellow eco-activists and neighbors on February 8 to [peacefully protest the removal of a 50" diameter willow oak at 2437 N. Utah St.](#) in the Donaldson Run neighborhood near the Potomac River.



As background, ATAG and alarmed neighbors wrote the builder, Cherry Hill Homes, on August 11, 2020, citing multiple benefits of mature trees, particularly in this area of steep grades and disastrous 2019 flooding in Donaldson Run. ATAG also raised this case with the Arlington's Urban Forestry Office. Despite entreaties, on January 13, the county approved the builder's plans to demolish the modest 1950's brick rambler and to clear cut the lot to build a new single-family home. Sadly, this oak and 4 other large trees will be cut. Since 2005, builders have increasingly razed older homes and cleared lots in single-family neighborhoods. This pattern threatens Arlington's tree canopy.

ATAG believes that in a majority of cases, builders can operate within confines of zoning and stormwater rules to build new homes that are much larger, yet still save older trees. Most builders are unmoved by this view and there are no rules to prevent clear-cutting.



Public education is key to raise awareness of the role played by these mature trees. This huge willow oak soaks up over 2,000 gallons of precipitation every year. When it is cut, this becomes runoff that exacerbates flooding on Utah St., as seen below in July 2018. Unless the county addresses parameters of by-right construction, such risks, and flood waters, will continue to rise.

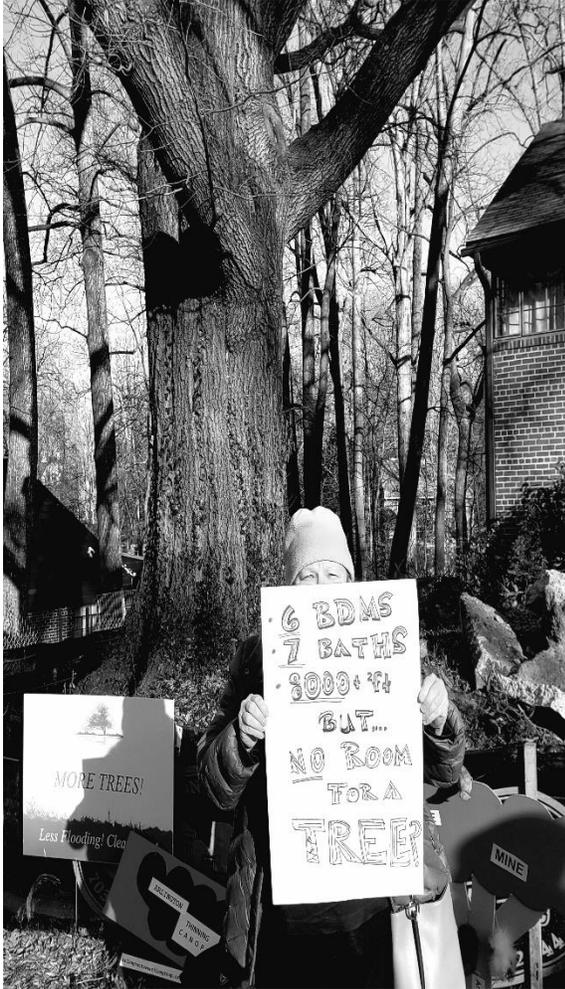
Willow oaks also have a very high wildlife value, serving as home to insects and birds and providing food for mammals.

Arlington requires builders and homeowners who remove trees to plant new vegetation that will cover 20% of the lot with new canopy within 20 years. Not good enough!

**DC government requires a permit to cut any tree over 14" diameter, why is Arlington less tree-friendly than DC?**



**We cannot save these trees, but with your help we can save others!**



That the County could permit the destruction of a legacy oak proves the system is too lax! We must preserve our existing tree canopy and the ecosystem it supports.

ATAG seeks a **stronger tree preservation ordinance**. We urge **Virginia/Arlington to implement NOW [HB 504](#)**, signed April 2020 by our governor but since stalled by Covid. This will give builders a way to use mature trees as credits to use toward their stormwater plans. The bill will also allow local jurisdictions to implement new regulations that will require builders to address climate change and sea level rise in new developments. Public comments on the [tree provisions](#) can be submitted here, and on the [climate change provision](#) here. Both comment periods extend through May 3.

Please advocate for these and other steps by writing to:

- Arlington County Board ([countyboard@arlingtonva.us](mailto:countyboard@arlingtonva.us))
- County Manager Mark Schwartz ([mchwartz@arlingtonva.us](mailto:mchwartz@arlingtonva.us))
- County Attorney Stephen MacIsaac ([smacisaac@arlingtonva.us](mailto:smacisaac@arlingtonva.us))
- Your [State Delegate](#) and [State Senator](#)

Sign up to get regular ATAG updates at [arlingtontreeactiongroup@gmail.com](mailto:arlingtontreeactiongroup@gmail.com) and check out our website <https://arlingtontreeactiongroup.org>