

PUBLIC FACILITIES REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING

DATE: March 13, 2013
TIME: 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.
PLACE: Courthouse Plaza, Rooms 109 & 111
2100 Clarendon Blvd

STAFF COORDINATOR: Freida Wray, 703-228-3541

Site Location:
Ashlawn Elementary School
5950 8th Road North
(RPC# 12-041-033)

Information:

Applicant:
John Chadwick
Arlington Public Schools
2770 S. Taylor Street
Arlington, Virginia 22206

Architect:
Doug Gehley
SHW Group
11415 Isaac Newton Square
Reston, Virginia 20190

Staff Members:

Marco Rivero	CPHD – Planning	703.228.3572	mrivero@arlingtonva.us
Dennis Sellin	DES – Planning	703.228.4805	dsellin@arlingtonva.us

SUMMARY: Arlington Public Schools (APS) is proceeding through the Building Level Planning Committee (BLPC) and the Public Facilities Review Committee (PFRC) processes for the renovation and addition on the Ashlawn Elementary School campus. The concept design for the proposed school addition and circulation pattern endorsing the North Manchester Street entry option was approved by the Arlington County School Board on December 20, 2012. The schematic design phase focused on further development and details of the school’s building program, layout, and design. The schematic design phase is complete and the project is now in its pre-filing stage for the use permit. Discussions continue regarding traffic circulation (vehicular and pedestrian) and proposed infrastructural additions/improvements to the site. Department of Environmental Services (DES) staff provided preliminary comments to the Toole Design traffic report at the February 20, 2013 PFRC meeting and will provide an updated matrix of recommendations with comments from staff at the March 13, 2013 PFRC meeting.

BACKGROUND: The 2013-22 Capital Improvements Program (CIP) was approved by the County Board in July, 2012. One of the projects listed within this plan included a renovation and addition to Ashlawn Elementary School for an additional +225 students currently located on relocatable structures on-site (approximately 700 students total). The addition would be approximately 27,000 square feet.

At a joint work session with the School Board held on July 24, 2012, the County Board endorsed a planning process for the Ashlawn project that incorporates the APS process (BLPC) and the County’s process for public facilities (PFRC), and requires them to work in tandem in designing the schools. The process would include three (3) phases: a conceptual phase, a schematic phase, and a final phase during which use permits for the projects would be requested and reviewed by

the County Board. A follow-up, joint work session with the School Board was held on October 25, 2012 discussing the various conceptual design options and circulation patterns. Both the County Board and School Board determined that more work needs to be done to further refine the conceptual design and circulation options, which is what APS and County staff are currently addressing. At the PFRC's November 27, 2012 meeting, the PFRC decided on moving forward with further developing and assessing the North Manchester Street circulation option. County Staff analyzed Toole Design Group's traffic report and devised comments and recommendations based on these findings. The Arlington County School Board endorsed the concept design for Ashlawn at their December 20, 2012 meeting. The final filing date to submit the use permit for the renovation and addition at Ashlawn Elementary School is March 11, 2013. By meeting this filing date, the application will be up for consideration by the County Board at their May 2013 meeting.

The BLPC consists of schools staff, teachers, parents and PTA members, representation from community groups, and County staff. APS has chosen SHW Group, a firm with eight (8) offices nationally, two (2) in Virginia specializing in school design, to design the renovation and addition for Ashlawn and run the BLPC process. Toole Design Group, an engineering firm locally based in Silver Spring, Maryland, has been chosen to analyze infrastructure, traffic, circulation, and parking patterns for the site. Within the month of September 2012, various transportation surveys and other preliminary analysis have been performed on the site with the preliminary results presented to the PFRC at their October 17, 2012 meeting. A more detailed report has been posted for review and a presentation of that report's recommendations was given to the PFRC at their November 27, 2012 meeting.

The PFRC is a subcommittee of the Planning Commission and consists of representatives of several commissions and the schools, as well as at-large members. It also includes project-specific members representing the Boulevard Manor, Dominion Hills, and Bluemont Civic Associations.

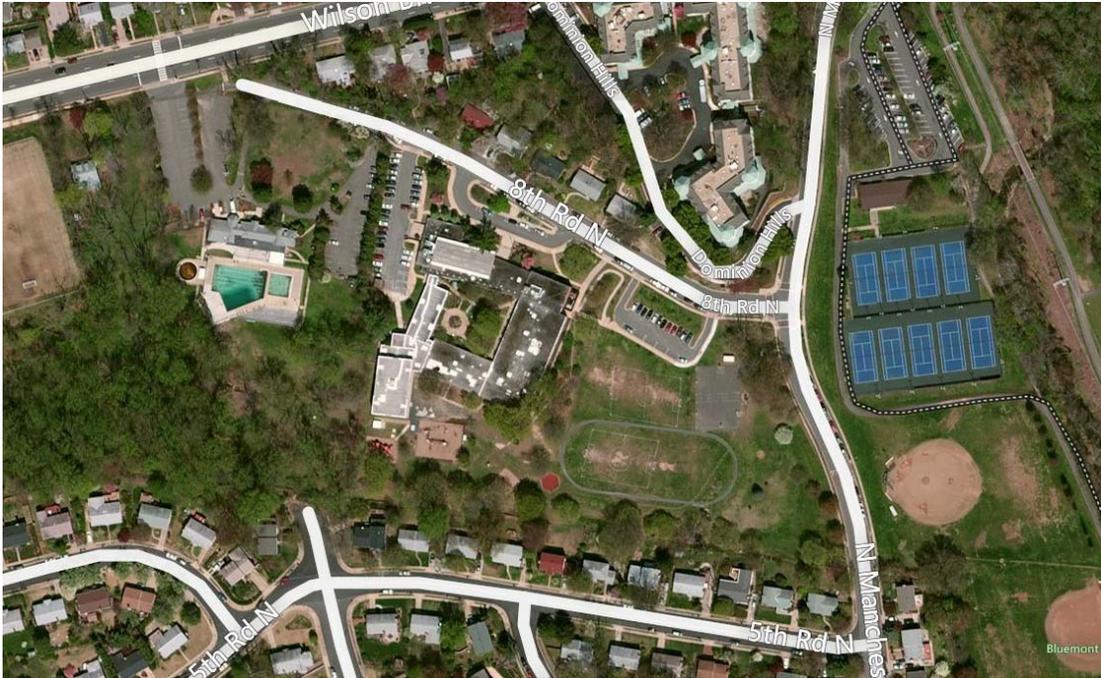
The following provides additional information about the site and surroundings:

Site: The site is bound on the north by 8th Road North and Wilson Boulevard, south by 5th Road North, east by North Manchester Street and Bluemont Park, and west by the Dominion Hills Pool and Powhatan Springs Park.

Zoning: The site is zoned "S-3A" Special Districts. Schools are a permitted use by provision of a use permit subject to ACZO Section 36.

Land Use: The site is identified on the General Land Use Plan (GLUP) as "Public"

Neighborhood: The site is located within the Boulevard Manor Civic Association and is adjacent to the Dominion Hills and Bluemont Civic Associations. Representatives from the aforementioned civic associations are involved in the BLPC and PFRC processes.



DISCUSSION: The BLPC has held eleven (12) meetings as of the date of this report, with the most recent occurring on February 19, 2013. The next scheduled BLPC meeting will be held on March 12, 2013. To date there have been five (6) meetings of the PFRC, which were held on July 25, 2012, September 26, 2012, October 17, 2012, November 27, 2012, January 15, 2013, and February 20, 2013. Several issues were identified, including further analysis regarding traffic, circulation, and parking (including potential vehicular and/or pedestrian connection options for the intersection of 8th Road North and Wilson Boulevard), visual impacts from the proposed new facilities, provision of adequate open space and recreation facilities, and creation of potential community facilities at the school campus. A summary of the meetings are located on the PFRC website. The *Principles of Civic Design in Arlington* provides the PFRC discussion points and guidelines on building siting, form, and design. The schematic design for the project was discussed at the February 20, 2013 PFRC meeting.

Building Massing –Schematic Design: Addition and Existing School



View at Front Entry

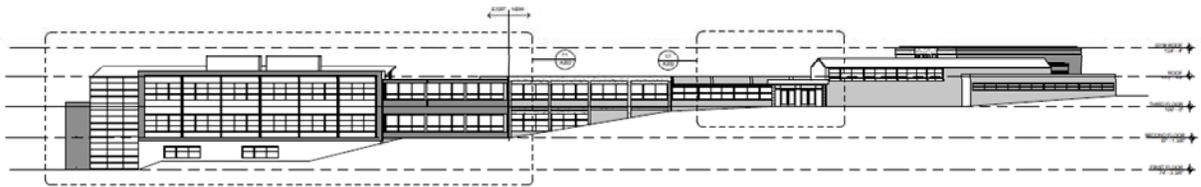


View from Approach up 8th Road

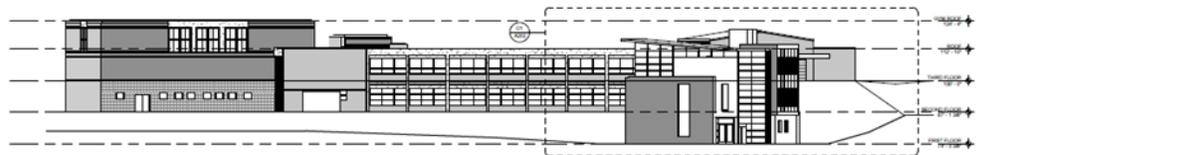


View of New Addition from the Play Fields

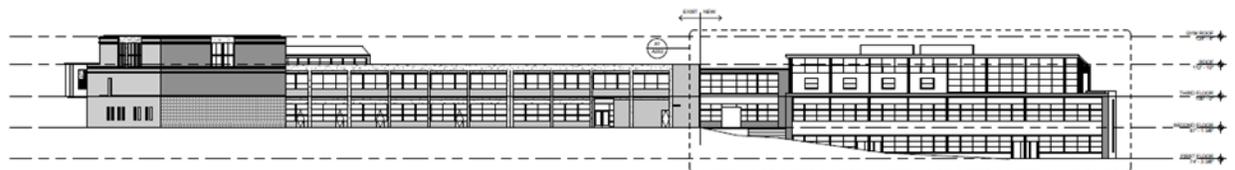
Proposed Elevation Drawings



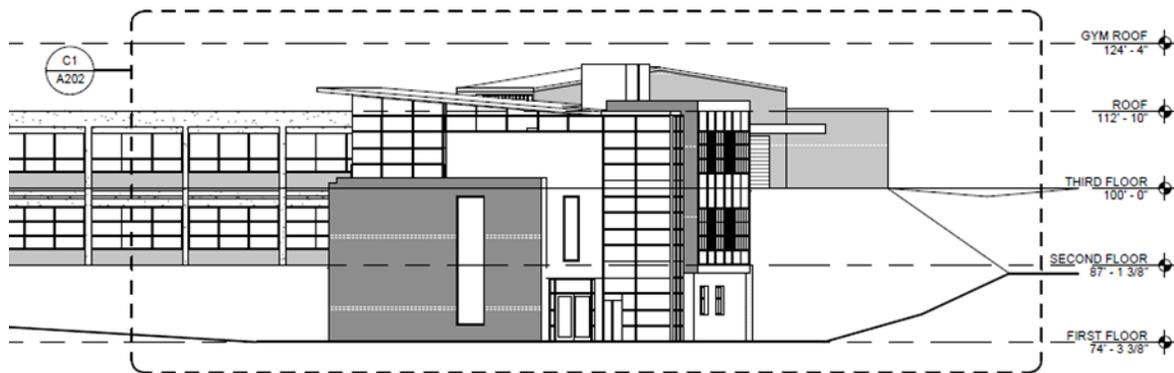
F2 OVERALL EXTERIOR ELEVATION NORTH



D2 OVERALL EXTERIOR ELEVATION EAST



A2 OVERALL EXTERIOR ELEVATION SOUTH



At the February 20, 2013 PFRC meeting, Oculus provided an overview of site development and landscaping, including preservation of existing and provision of new canopy and understory trees, pedestrian entrances and pathways, handicap access, bike racks, open space areas and ball fields, and site landscaping. Concerns that were raised and identified in the letter to the County Board included:

- Requirements for long-term landscaping maintenance should be addressed in a use permit condition.
- The amount of chain link fence on the site should be held to the absolute minimum.
- The area used as a neighborhood sledding hill should be kept free of additional landscaping.
- The amount of paved pathways should be reduced, including consideration for permeable pathways, and paths should be placed where students can actually be expected to travel.

SHW Group provided an overview of the expansion program, including internal layout and uses, building design, and details of the façade elevations and treatment. Concerns that were raised and identified in the letter to the County Board included:

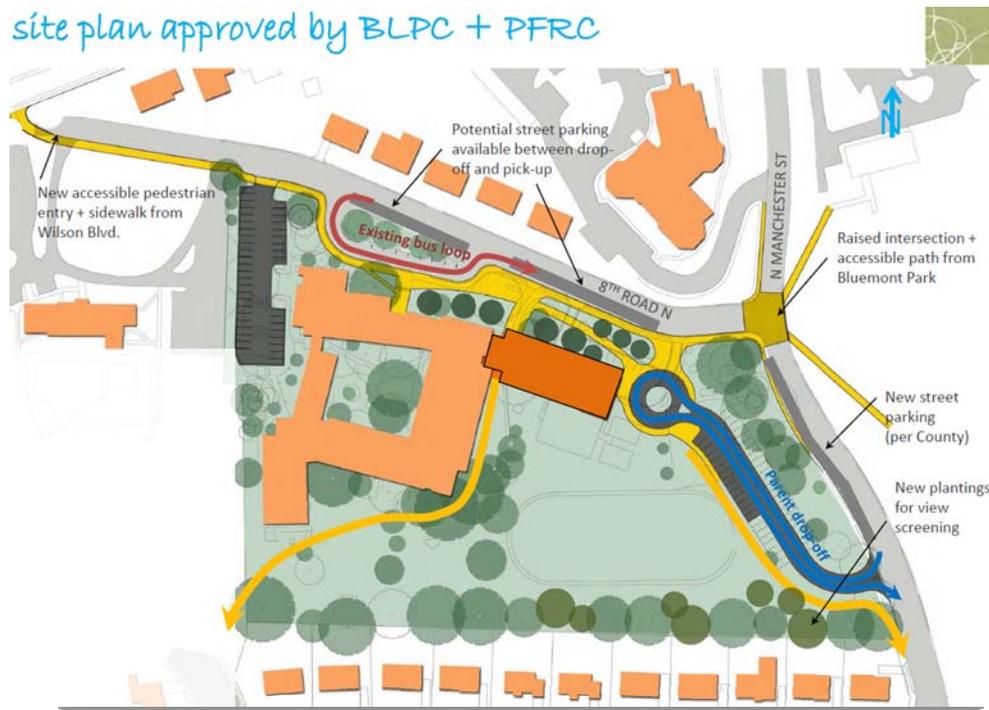
- The windows in the southwestern corner of the media center should be consistent with others in the media center.
- The visual impact of the blank brick walls on the addition's eastern façade should be reduced.
- The main school entry is not clear or prominent and should be enhanced.
- Additional screening and placement of rooftop mechanical equipment on the existing structures should be considered.

Transportation and Circulation: Staff has identified a number of goals with respect to circulation and transportation that should be discussed during the public process for incorporation into the building and site design:

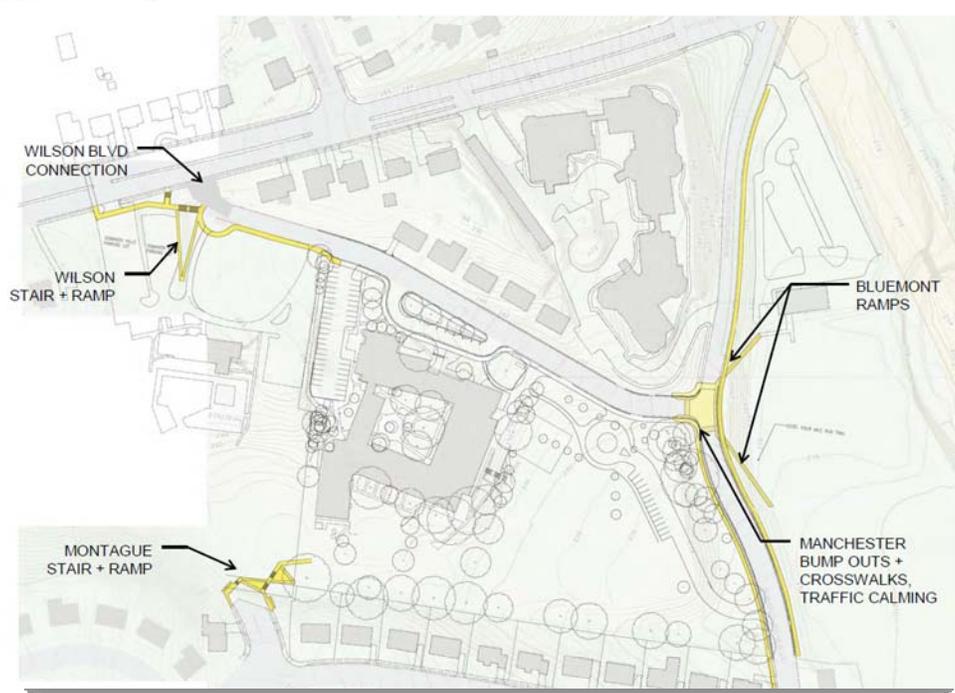
- Emphasis on multi-modal transportation opportunities
- Incorporate building access and circulation into building siting
- Minimize parking/drop-off adjacent to street and sidewalk areas
- Coordinate opening/closing times to manage traffic
- Examine existing/proposed transportation impacts to surrounding communities and incorporate into design
- Implement County standard for sidewalks, streetscapes, and driveways

At the January 15, 2013 PFRC meeting, DES staff stated they would provide preliminary comments at the February 20, 2013 PFRC meeting with regards to the Toole Design Group transportation study, which includes over 50 recommendations for transportation related improvements.

Proposed Circulation Plan and Off-Site Improvements



off-site improvements



Draft School Transportation Plan

The Toole Design Group has prepared a school transportation plan for Ashlawn elementary school (the final draft was issued on November 26, 2012). The draft report includes an assessment of transportation impacts of the proposed expansion project, as well as proposed infrastructure and programmatic recommendations. These recommendations, according to the draft report, are intended to mitigate demand for automobile traffic and improve safety for student pedestrians.

There are a total of fifty-three projects recommended by Toole. The recommendations are broken into six categories: pedestrian access and safety (29), signs and markings (16), traffic engineering and operations (4), bicycle access (2), parking (1), and enforcement (1). The majority (85%) of recommendations are those which are for pedestrian access and safety, and those which would add or change signage or roadway markings. Pedestrian access and safety projects include provision of new or improved pedestrian pathways and sidewalks, lighting, new crosswalks and raised crosswalks, curb extensions, reductions of curb radii, and removal of obstacles or visual impediments. Sign and markings projects include stop signs, regulatory and speed limit signs, crosswalk markings, and lane markings. Traffic engineering and operations recommendations include addition of school crossing guards in two locations, and a “road diet” for Wilson Boulevard between Patrick Henry Drive and George Mason Boulevard.

Matrix of Recommendations

At the February 20, 2013 PFRC meeting, DES provided an overview of the draft Transportation Recommendation Matrix, which included the 53 recommendations of the TDG Transportation Study, plus one recommendation of the County, for a total of 54 recommendations. Of the 54 recommendations, 45 addressed pedestrian access and safety issues. The Matrix prioritized the recommendations based on high, medium and low priority, required, or discouraged. The PFRC recommended that the Matrix be reformatted to prioritize the recommendations based on student safety impacts.

While consensus among the PFRC had already been reached at an earlier PFRC meeting supporting the Manchester Street parent drop-off loop, the PFRC agreed to indicate in its letter to the County Board the following transportation concerns:

- Handicap accessibility to the school should be reviewed, especially as it relates to building entry and location of handicapped parking.
- The provision of a rear entrance closer to North Montague Street, and a direct pathway to access it, should be confirmed.
- The amount and location of parking needs further clarification.
- Transportation infrastructure improvements should be prioritized based on the greatest immediate impact on student safety. The agencies responsible for implementation should be assigned to each improvement.
- Operational traffic management issues need further review and clarification as the process continues.

Further clarification to questions raised at the last PFRC meeting, and the reformatted Matrix will be available for review and discussed in further detail at the March 13, 2013 PFRC meeting.