

PUBLIC FACILITIES REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING

DATE: January 20, 2016
TIME: 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.
PLACE: Stratford School

STAFF COORDINATOR: Michelle Stahlhut, 703-228-3541

Site Location:
Stratford School
4100 Vacation Lane
Arlington, Virginia 22207

Applicant: John Chadwick Arlington Public Schools 2770 S. Taylor Street Arlington, Virginia 22206	Architect: Dan Curry, Project Manager Quinn Evans Architects 2121 Ward Pl NW Washington, DC 20037
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Staff Members:

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Jane S. Kim	DES – Planning		jskim@arlingtonva.us
Diane Probus	DPR – Planning		
Rebecca Ballo	CPHD – Historic Preservation		

SUMMARY: Arlington Public Schools (APS) is continuing the Building Level Planning Committee (BLPC) process and the Public Facilities Review Committee (PFRC) process to evaluate a proposed renovation of and addition to the Stratford school building. The building will become a neighborhood middle school, and currently houses the Stratford Program and H-B Woodlawn Program. The BLPC and PFRC processes are both beginning the schematic design phase of the project where details of site access and circulation, building massing, parking, stormwater, tree impacts, and other items will be discussed. The concept design for the project proposes accommodation for 1,000 seats at this site through renovation and an addition on the west end of the existing building.

BACKGROUND: There are a number of APS and County processes underway with regard to planning the ultimate expansion and renovation of the Stratford School site, outlined below.

APS CIP Process

The 2015-24 APS Capital Improvements Program (CIP) was approved by the Arlington School Board in June 2014. The CIP called for a process to determine the location of an additional 1,300 secondary school seats in the northern part of the County. The CIP also set the total budget for providing the seats (\$126,000,000) and the deadline for their delivery (September 2019). At the conclusion of a community engagement process which began in September 2014, the School Board gave final direction to APS in December 2014. At their December 18, 2014 meeting, the School Board voted to renovate and build an addition at the Stratford School site to establish a

new neighborhood middle school with 1,000 seats with a project budget of \$29,200,000 for hard and soft costs. The School Board also voted to construct a new school at the Wilson site, which would accommodate the existing H-B Woodlawn and Stratford programs currently located at the Stratford building.

County/APS Schools Review Process

At a joint work session with the School Board held on April 10, 2015, the County Board endorsed a planning process for the Stratford School site. The APS planning process for the Stratford School site will incorporate the APS process, the Building Level Planning Committee (BLPC), and the County's Public Facilities Review Committee (PFRC), and requires them to work in tandem in designing the new school. The design process will include three (3) phases: a conceptual phase, a schematic phase, and a final phase during which a use permit for the project would be reviewed by the County Board.

The BLPC consists of APS staff, teachers, parents and PTA members, representation from community groups, and County staff and is tasked with making recommendations on the programming of the new addition. The APS community process for the Stratford school site began on April 8, 2015. Since that time, the BLPC has met formally seventeen times and several times informally. The most recent meeting was held [January 4, 2016](#) where more details on building massing, architecture, and building layout were discussed. The next BLPC meeting is a joint meeting with PFRC scheduled for January 20, 2016. Presentations and Minutes from publicly noticed BLPC meetings can be found on the [APS Design and Construction: Stratford Middle School](#) website.

The PFRC is a County Board-appointed committee consisting of representatives of the Planning Commission (one of which is designated by the County Board as Committee Chair) and several other commissions, APS representatives, and at-large members. It also includes project-specific members representing Cherrydale, Donaldson Run, and Waverly Hills Civic Associations. The PFRC is tasked with ensuring the highest quality of land use planning, design, transportation planning, and other important community aspects are incorporated into civic projects across the County. The PFRC first met on April 15, 2015 and discussed introductory items such as the role and charge of the PFRC and an overview of the use permit process and has met seven times since then to discuss the concept design for the site.

Historic Designation

The Stratford school was listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register in 2003, and the [National Historic Register](#) in 2004. In 1959 Stratford Junior High was the first public school to integrate in the state of Virginia. The architecture is also recognized as the best example of an international-style school building in Arlington County and was one of the most modern school buildings in the area when constructed.

On March 31, 2015, the Historic Preservation Program staff received [a request for local historic district designation](#) of Stratford Junior High School Building as a local historic district. If this request were granted, a zoning overlay will be added to the site that will trigger review by the Historic Affairs and Landmark Review Board ([HALRB](#)) for any exterior alterations to the property. A member of the HALRB has been asked to serve on the PFRC for this project. As part

of this process, County staff and APS staff have developed and continue to refine historic design guidelines for Stratford School. On June 17, 2015 the HALRB voted [to recommend designation](#) of the site as a historic district. As part of a Memorandum of Understanding between Arlington County and Arlington Public Schools, the School Board considered the recommendation as an information item at the School Board Meeting on [August 13](#).

The School Board considered the historic designation as an info item at its [November 16 public hearing](#). On December 8, the School Board [made a motion](#) to direct the Superintendent to set aside the current MOU and pursue an alternate process for historic district designation. The School Board also moved to ask the County Board to consider amending the zoning ordinance to allow the County Board to review and approve the Certificate of Appropriateness (CoA) for Stratford School. The guidelines for reviewing the CoA would be the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards*. As part of that motion the School Board signaled its intention to take action on the local historic district designation as soon as the zoning ordinance amendment is complete. At its December 15, 2015 recessed meeting, the County Board directed the County Manager and staff to prepare this Zoning Ordinance Amendment. Historic Preservation staff are bringing this item to the January 19th ZOCO meeting, with the goal of advertising the item in February for March Planning Commission and County Board hearings.

Stratford Guiding Principles

On June 16, 2015, the County Board adopted the [Stratford Guiding Principles](#) during discussion of the [County Manager's report](#). The Guiding Principles are intended to provide site specific considerations for the subject site for the PFRC in its consideration of the Stratford School addition. These Guiding Principles also incorporate the [Principles of Civic Design in Arlington](#) which were developed by the PFRC in 2008 and are intended to inform the design of civic facilities in Arlington, including buildings and other projects, to ensure they meet community goals for attractiveness, durability, and functionality. The principles reinforce and supplement existing County planning documents and policies, and are meant to promote compliance with certain basic principles, but not to inhibit creative design.

Site Characteristics:

The following provides additional information about the site and surroundings:

Site: The site is bound on the north by 23rd Street North and Vacation Lane, on the east by single-family homes, on the south by Old Dominion Drive, and on the west by existing County owned park facilities and single-family homes facing Lorcom Lane.

Zoning: The site is zoned "S-3A" Special District. The purpose of the "S-3A" Special District is to encourage the retention of certain properties in a relatively undeveloped state. Land so designated may include publicly or privately owned properties which have distinct and unique site advantages or other features so as to make them desirable to retain as active or passive recreation (including but not limited to: parks, schools, pathways, and other public facilities). Schools are a permitted use by provision of a use permit subject to Section 4.15 of the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance (ACZO).

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

Neighborhood: The site is located within the Cherrydale Civic Association and is adjacent to the Donaldson Run and Waverly Hills Civic Associations.

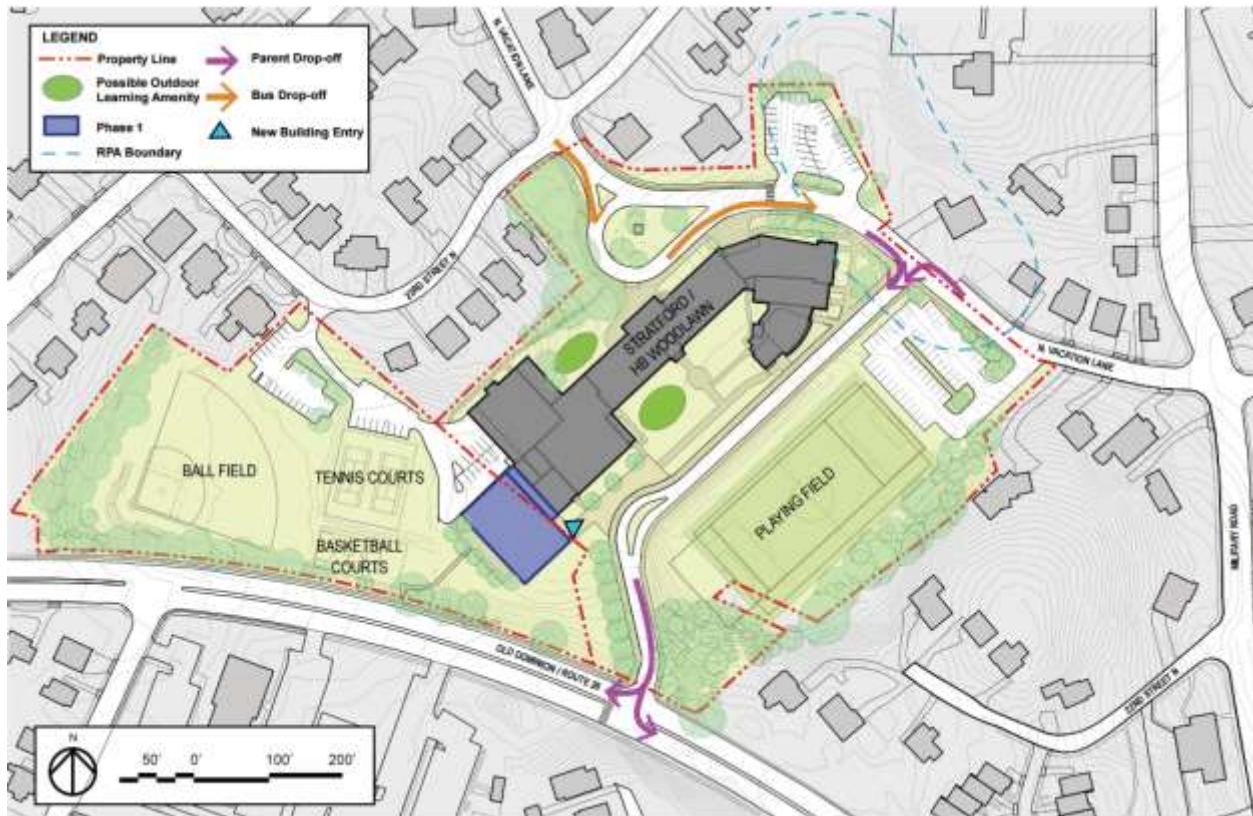


Source: Google Maps

DISCUSSION

Proposal

The current Stratford school building is approximately 142,000 square feet and services approximately 700 students. The concept design adopted by the School Board includes a three-story 35,000 square foot addition for 1,000 students and is located on the west end of the school on an existing parking lot and property owned by DPR. The design includes a private driveway across the site connecting Vacation Lane to Old Dominion, although the County is requiring APS to preserve a non-driveway design option should the driveway prove to be infeasible or not needed.



Based on the concept adopted by the School Board on November 16, 2015 and meetings with APS staff, Arlington County staff have the following comments:

Parks

Stratford Park is a 5-acre park located directly adjacent to the school at its west end. Where the park boundary meets the school boundary there are a series of parking lots which are used for school parking during school hours and both park and school parking after school hours. The remaining portion of the park is used for recreation and includes a diamond field, two tennis courts and a basketball court. These facilities are worn and in need of replacement to bring them up to ADA and County standards so they can be used to their full capacity.

A park renovation project was planned for Stratford Park and funded in the adopted FY2015 budget as part of a Parks Maintenance Capital project. The renovation project entails replacement of the existing facilities in their general location and bringing them up to standards. Funds allocated for the park renovation in the CIP will not support significant changes to the park design or investment in expanding APS amenities.

In the spring of 2015, DPR completed a concept for the park renovation project but put the project on hold until the School Board approved a concept for the expansion of Stratford School. The concept design selected by the School Board includes a new addition on the existing parking lot located at the west end of the school on property owned by DPR. DPR continues to work closely with APS to ensure coordinated design and construction of both projects. In particular DPR and APS will work together to integrate pedestrian circulation between the school addition and the park recreational area, integrating any changes needed to provide ADA accessible

parking spaces for park and school visitors and the designation of a portion of parking spaces for park visitors to use during school hours.

Transportation

Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure

DES and CPHD will be looking at the entire pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure in the immediate vicinity of the school to see if there are opportunities to utilize existing capital programs as well as joint efforts with APS to fund infrastructure improvements. Toole Design Group has identified several recommendations for Vacation Lane to improve pedestrian and bicycle access including:

- Continuous sidewalks on both sides of Vacation Lane, including across driveway openings;
- Curb extensions, and pedestrian crossing improvements at the Vacation Lane intersections with Lorcom Lane, 23rd St. N., and Military Road;
- A curb extension and raised crosswalk in front of the school;
- On-street parking restrictions on alternate sides of the street during drop-off and pick-up times;
- A curb lane along the school's eastern Vacation Lane frontage allowing for use by cars and buses.

Transportation Impact Analysis

Preliminary transportation information was presented by Toole Design Group (TDG) at the June 11 and July 16, 2015 PFRC meetings as well as in a document presented to the School Board on November 5, 2015. Based on the November 5 document, the number of parent trips per day as provided by TDG are 750 for the existing programs and 1,150 for the proposed 1,000-seat middle school. Based on the trip generation as well as the preliminary queueing and intersection analysis (July 16), we agree with Toole Design Group's assessment that a driveway connection to Old Dominion Road is not a necessity from a transportation and safety perspective (November 5). A full TIA is expected to be complete by March 2016.

Old Dominion Access

Based on the preliminary information provided by Toole Design Group, county staff does not support the on-site driveway connection to Old Dominion Drive. Staff believes that with pedestrian and bicycle improvements in addition to a review of the operations of the streets and intersections in the vicinity of the school site, the increase in vehicular trips to the proposed neighborhood middle school can be adequately met without a connection to Old Dominion Drive. Additionally, such a driveway has other negative impacts including to the Resource Protection Area (RPA) on the eastern side of the site, a loss of trees along a steep slope at the proposed connection point to Old Dominion Drive, and an increase in impervious area that would have to be treated to meet all stormwater and watershed requirements. There are also concerns about the cost of a private access driveway and signalized intersection that would only be in use for 2-3 hours per school day.

APS and county staff have reviewed the operations of the Vacation Lane intersections at Lorcom Lane and Military Road and have preliminarily determined that while any operational or directional restrictions such as limited-hour signage preventing left and/or right turns may reduce

the trips on Vacation Lane, they would negatively impact the signalized and non-signalized intersections within the greater transportation network. Additionally, three possible locations for remote parent drop-off/pick-up sites within the vicinity of the school property have been identified and will be further evaluated. The review of these operations is currently on-going and will continue to be evaluated and will be presented to the public for input and comment.

Pedestrian and bicycle safety is a top priority and without a signalized driveway at Old Dominion, staff is in full support of the installation of a high-intensity activated crosswalk (HAWK) beacon to facilitate safe crossing of Old Dominion Drive. Additionally, staff will further evaluate the intersections of Vacation Lane with Lorcom Lane and Military Road to see if signage (all-way stops) or other measures (RRFB, crossing guards), including those recommended by TDG, can be implemented to provide safe access for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Historic Preservation

The Stratford School is a nationally recognized historic site. At its hearing, the HALRB found that the property meets 8 of the 11 criteria for local historic district designation. The Designation Report detailed the history of the property and was able to demonstrate that the rear elevation of the school, the relationship of the school to the surrounding site, including the athletic field, and the views of the school from adjacent public streets, are critical components of the historic character of this site. Architecturally, the front and rear elevations, including the gymnasium, are the least altered and best represent the original design intent of the architect. The rear elevation and front entrance have particular historical importance. The first attempt to integrate the Stratford School occurred in 1957 when students entered via the front portico. The second, and ultimately the successful attempt, to integrate occurred when the 4 students walked down the pathway from Old Dominion Drive towards the rear of the school under armed guard. They were greeted and escorted inside. The entire property was guarded by Arlington County police for the first week the students attended as they entered the building via the rear stair tower.

The Stratford School was listed to the National Register under Criteria A (History) and Criteria C (Architecture). When evaluating the potential impacts that any new construction may have on the property, the [Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Renovation and Rehabilitation should](#) be applied, per the Guiding Principles. Site options that obscure critical viewsheds associated with how the school was integrated, remove or encapsulate historic elevations, or that fundamentally alter the relationship between the historic building and the adjacent athletic field should be avoided in favor of options that have fewer or no adverse impacts. Being respectful and sensitive to the importance of these elevations means that they should remain as unaltered, accessible, and publicly viewable as possible so that the historical importance of the manner in which the school integrated can still be read and experienced by the public. Proposals that are both sensitive to the architectural and cultural history of the site should be further explored as part of the design review process.

Trees

The proposed new access drive will significantly increase tree impact to the site because the APS field will have to be pushed further south requiring the removal of a portion of the tree line between the school and residential housing. This will result in reduction of the natural buffer and loss of high quality oak trees. The grading required for the access drive to connect with Old

Dominion Drive will result in removal of a number of higher value oaks and hickories on the southern corner of the APS site.

APS should consider early on in their design the high impact to trees and where replacement trees can be planted. The APS site may not have adequate space for all the replacement trees and planting them on the park site is not an option. APS should fully weigh the long term environmental impact and the impact to the project budget from removing dozens of mature trees in the forest edge.

Resource Protection Area (RPA)

The stream and the RPA that protects it are a fundamental site feature/constraint that will be impacted by the project. Impacts to the RPA are to be avoided unless no other feasible options exist. An exception is required to expand impervious cover, increase encroachment or change use. Mitigation will be required to offset impacts with the goal of enhancing the RPA. Mitigation can take the form of additional stormwater controls or buffer enhancement or both depending on the RPA impacts. It is likely the proposal for the driveway in the RPA area will trigger an exception process and review by the Chesapeake Bay Ordinance Review Committee.



Stormwater

An access drive connecting to Old Dominion will require significant land disturbance in terms of grading and will also increase both the amount of impervious area on the site as well as the amount of stormwater draining to the site. The stormwater currently on and south of Old Dominion (where the elevation is higher) currently flows alongside the road and is captured in a storm sewer network via catch basins. With a curb cut on Old Dominion, some of this stormwater will flow to the Stratford School site and will need to be captured and treated according to the stormwater management regulations and policies.

Fire

Any upgrades or additions to the existing building will require the entire site to be updated to current fire code standards. Fire apparatus access roadways need a minimum unobstructed width

of 20 feet for any building or portion of a building less than 30 feet in height, and 26 feet in the immediate vicinity of any building or portion of building more than 30 feet in height. At least one of the required access routes meeting this condition need to be located within a minimum of 15 feet and a maximum of 30 feet from the building, and to be positioned parallel to one entire side of the building.

Use Permit

The ACZO distinguishes between uses permitted “by-right” and uses allowed by “special exception.” The use permit is one form of special exception, and is required for schools in the “S-3A” zoning district. The use permit offers a process for considering and approving such uses, subject to special conditions particular to the character of the use. Potential areas that may be addressed by conditions include but are not limited to: construction, transportation, environmental impacts, and recreational fields. After the BLPC and PFRC processes are complete, APS will file a use permit for the proposed school addition. Use permits are approved by the County Board.