

**PUBLIC FACILITIES REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING**

**DATE:** June 7, 2016  
**TIME:** 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.  
**PLACE:** Wilson School  
1601 Wilson Boulevard

**STAFF COORDINATOR:** Michelle Stahlhut, 703-228-3541

**Site Location:**  
Wilson School  
1601 Wilson Boulevard  
Arlington, Virginia 22209

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

**Architect:**  
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**SUMMARY:** Arlington Public Schools (APS) has begun the Building Level Planning Committee (BLPC) process and is starting the Public Facilities Review Committee (PFRC) process to evaluate a new secondary school on the Wilson School site. Both processes are in the conceptual stage and major topics such as building placement, parking, and site circulation are currently being discussed.

**BACKGROUND:** There are a number of APS and County processes that affect planning of the ultimate design and use of the Wilson 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 Board meeting, the School Board voted to construct a new school at the Wilson site, which would accommodate the existing H-B Woodlawn and Stratford programs. The new building would add 70 seats to the capacity of the existing programs, for a total of 775 seats, with a project budget of \$80,200,000. The direction from the School Board also called for renovations and additions at the Stratford School site to establish a new neighborhood middle school with 1,000 seats and the provision of 300 additional secondary seats at a single or multiple sites.

## WRAPS

The Western Rosslyn Area Planning Study (WRAPS) is a County-led community planning process to create a future vision and Area Plan for the Western Rosslyn area, generally bordered by Key Boulevard and 18<sup>th</sup> Street North to the north, Wilson Boulevard to the south, North Quinn Street to the west, and the eastern property line of the 1555 Wilson Boulevard office building site to the east. The Wilson School site is located within the WRAPS study area as well as surrounding sites which include Fire Station #10, Rosslyn Highlands Park, an office building, retail uses, and affordable, multi-family apartments. As part of the WRAPS effort, a Working Group was established to work with County staff to review, refine, and identify a preliminary preferred site layout for a new school on the Wilson site, for subsequent review by the Public Facilities Review Committee (PFRC). Other goals for the WRAPS process include accommodating recreation and open space, a new fire station, and affordable housing.

County staff presented a preliminary concept plan with two alternatives for location of the new school to the County Board at a work session held on March 4, 2015. The County Board expressed general support for the proposed plan recommendations and directed staff to continue to examine alternative options for vehicular and service access to and through the site with the stated goal of creating a larger, contiguous open space. The County Board also agreed that the final site layout for the Wilson School site should be determined through the PFRC process. At a subsequent County Board work session on May 5, 2015, staff presented a more refined preferred concept plan as well as an analysis of additional design alternatives in response to the Board's previous guidance. On July 6, 2015 the Planning Commission recommended adoption of the Western Rosslyn Area Plan.

The County Board voted unanimously to adopt the Western Rosslyn Area Plan (WRAP) at its July 21, 2015 meeting. With regard to the school site, the draft plan includes the following recommendations:

- A concept plan with two potential site and building layout options for the Wilson School building, to be located either along Wilson Boulevard or 18<sup>th</sup> Street North;
- Staff commitment to study a potential alternative configuration of the adjacent Penzance office building to have an east-west orientation;
- Maximum building height of 175' for the school building;
- New, landscaped pedestrian connection located east of the school site to run north-south from Wilson Boulevard to 18<sup>th</sup> Street North;
- Open space areas to include school recreation space and a redeveloped Rosslyn Highlands Park along 18<sup>th</sup> Street North;
- School recreation space and other amenities to be provided both at ground level and above grade;
- Potential school bus and parent loading to occur along either N. Quinn Street or 18<sup>th</sup> Street North; and
- Urban design guidelines that address building architecture, service, parking, and streetscape, and open space and recreation areas.

Changes to the draft plan that occurred post-advertisement include adding additional clarity about a public park planning process for Rosslyn Highlands Park, expected to be initiated by fall 2015.

### Historic District Designation

On November 17, 2014, the Historic Preservation Program staff received a request for local historic district designation of the Wilson School from 12 Arlington residents. On February 17, 2015, the School Board formally voted to object to the requested designation, citing concerns regarding the impacts on the amount of available open space, effective use of below grade buildable area, building egress and accessibility requirements for the 1910 section of the existing building, and the costs associated with restoration and rehabilitation. On February 18, 2015, after two separate public hearings on the request, the Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (HALRB) unanimously recommended the creation of a local historic district that would have included only the 1910 section of the Wilson School (the original Fort Myer Heights School) and its frontage on Wilson Boulevard. At its April 18, 2015 meeting, the County Board voted against designating any portion of the Wilson School as a local historic district. Instead, the Board directed the County Manager to have Historic Preservation Program staff and Arlington Public Schools (APS) staff collaborate with the HALRB to identify and incorporate ways to memorialize and commemorate the historical and community value of the Wilson School in the design of a new school facility on the existing site. To that end, a member of the HALRB has been asked to serve on the PFRC for this project.

### 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 Wilson School site. The APS planning process for the Wilson 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. 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 the North Rosslyn, Colonial Village III, and Radnor/Ft. Myer Heights Civic Associations, as well as the Atrium Condominium Association.

### Park Planning Process

The public park planning process for Rosslyn Highlands Park (RHP+) began with a community meeting on September 29, 2015 to review the Coordinated Open Spaces Plan, followed by subsequent meetings on October 20 and November 9. The concept was presented to Parks and Recreation Commission on November 17 and to Urban Forestry Commission on November 19. A community open house was held on December 10, 2015, and an update for the RHP+ Coordinated Open Spaces Plan was presented to the County Board on January 26, 2016. The final Coordinated Open Spaces Plan concept is anticipated to be considered by the County Board in July 2016.

**Site Characteristics:**

The following provides additional information about the site and surroundings:

Site: The site is bound on the north by 18<sup>th</sup> Street North, on the south by Wilson Boulevard, on the east by Rosslyn Highlands Park and the Arlington County Fire Station #10, and on the west by an existing 7-11 retail store and N. Quinn Street.

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 North Rosslyn Citizens Association and is adjacent to the Colonial Village III Homeowners Association and Radnor/Ft. Myer Heights Civic Associations. The Atrium Condominiums are located adjacent to the school site to the north and will be represented on the PFRC.

**Figure 1: Location of 1601 Wilson Boulevard (Wilson School)**



**DISCUSSION:** The new school planned for the Wilson site would be designed to accommodate the H.B. Woodlawn Secondary School, Stratford Program, ESOL/HILT and Aspergers Programs currently located at the Stratford site. The new school would also accommodate an expansion of these programs by 75 seats.

Principles of Civic Design/WRAPS Guiding Principles: The [\*Principles of Civic Design in Arlington\*](#) 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. The Principles will inform and guide the PFRC's discussion of the proposed addition with regard to civic values, site and orientation, building form, and building details and materials.

As mentioned previously, the Western Rosslyn Area Plan (WRAP) was approved in July 2015 including additional guiding principles developed by the WRAPS working group, which will be utilized as part of this and future processes tasked with designing and evaluating new development projects within the study area. These principles, or at least the portion that speak to issues relevant to this site, are meant to augment the existing Principles of Civic Design.

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.

## Community Process

### *Building Level Planning Committee*

The APS community process for the Wilson School site began on April 14, 2015 with the first BLPC meeting and fourteen (14) meetings have been held as of the date of this report, with the most recent meeting occurring on May 11, 2016. At the May 11 meeting, the BLPC voted to support the schematic design in a letter to the School Board, with concerns over parking capacity associated with the project. Presentations and meeting notes from each of the BLPC meetings can be viewed on the [APS website for the Wilson project](#).

To date there have been seven (7) meetings of the PFRC, which were held on July 25, 2012, September 26, 2012, October 17, 2012, November 27, 2012, January 15, 2013, February 20, 2013, and March 13, 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 8<sup>th</sup> 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 and pre-application use permit renderings were shown and discussed at the March 13, 2013 PFRC meeting.

#### *Public Facilities Review Committee*

The first PFRC meeting was held on May 14, 2015, which included an introduction to the process, APS design team, site characteristics, and BLPC process. The APS consultants also presented five (5) preliminary design concepts for the school building. To date there have been six (6) meetings of the PFRC, which were held on:

- May 14, 2015
- June 11, 2015
- July 15, 2015
- October 15, 2015
- March 16, 2016
- May 11, 2016

At the most recent May 11 PFRC meeting, design consultants Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG) presented a review of building organization and concept plans, interior views, building materials, terrace design, and discussion of commemorative building models. APS transportation consultants, Toole Design Group, provided a brief presentation covering traffic analysis and bus management recommendations. The meeting was scheduled prior to a BLPC meeting for the project, and the PFRC was not able to finish discussion and move to a vote.

#### Proposal:

The current design concept, based on the fanning bars scheme, was selected as the preferred option by both the BLPC and PFRC. The APS design team conducted and presented a more thorough study of that concept, including draft renderings and conceptual drawings showing the proposed building organization. Key features of the proposed design concept are provided below:

- Building Concept Design
  - The building would consist of five “bars” containing classroom space. Each bar would increase in height one level moving from the west to the east. The tallest “bar” in the concept, located along the eastern edge of the site, would have five levels. An open, central stair would provide a connection between each level. Terraces are proposed on the roof of each bar, which could accommodate a variety of functions, including gathering and recreation spaces. The spaces in between the bars also provide areas for similar uses at the grade level.
- Building Entrances and Site Access
  - The main entrance to the ground level of the Stratford program for students would be from 18<sup>th</sup> Street North, using a covered entry under the elevated playing field. A second street entrance for staff and visitors would be located along N. Quinn Street providing access to an upper level of the program for administrative offices.

- The H-B Woodlawn program would have its main entrance from Wilson Boulevard, with additional entrances from N. Quinn Street and 18<sup>th</sup> Street North.
- Parking/Loading
  - One level of below grade parking would be located below the playing field, taking advantage of the change in grade on site. Both parking and loading would be accessed from 18<sup>th</sup> Street North. The number of parking spaces has not been finalized yet.
  - Bus parking would likely occur on 18<sup>th</sup> Street North and parent pick-up and drop-off could occur along N. Quinn Street. Staff is still evaluating the proposed vehicular access to the site for parking, loading, and drop-off/pick-up.

**Figure 2: Draft Concept Site Plan**



**Figure 3: Exterior Views**



**Figure 4: Building Section (Looking East)**

