

PUBLIC FACILITIES REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING

DATE: June 11, 2015
TIME: 8:00 – 10:00 p.m.
PLACE: Stratford School
4100 Vacation Lane

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:
Sean Franklin, Project Manager
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Staff Members:

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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 underway with regard to planning 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 18th 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. Additional working group and public meetings are anticipated in May and June and the final framework plan is tentatively scheduled for review at the July 2015 County Board meeting.

The [WRAPS draft plan](#) is currently available for public review and comment. The County Board will hear a request to advertise the plan for public hearings at its June 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 18th 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 18th Street North;
- Open space areas to include school recreation space and a redeveloped Rosslyn Highlands Park along 18th Street North;
- School recreation space and other amenities to be provided both at ground level and above grade;
- School bus parking to occur along either N. Quinn Street or 18th Street North; and
- Urban design guidelines that address building architecture, service, parking, and streetscape, and open space and recreation areas.

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.

Site Characteristics:

The following provides additional information about the site and surroundings:

Site: The site is bound on the north by 18th 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.



Source: Google Maps

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, a larger planning process for this site and the surrounding area is already underway as part of the WRAPS initiative. Additional guiding principles (see attached) were 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. It is anticipated that they will be adopted as part of the final small area plan in July.

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. The initial BLPC meeting included a presentation by APS on the CIP process as well as by the architect and associated design team. The second BLPC meeting was held on April 29, 2015. This meeting included a presentation on the preliminary findings of the transportation study and an interactive site analysis (group activity). At the third BLPC meeting, held on May 13, 2015, the applicant presented five preliminary design concepts for review and discussion. Each of concepts accommodated approximately the same amount of building area and could be located on either Wilson Boulevard or 18th Street North. At the fourth BLPC meeting on May 27, 2015, the applicant’s design team presented further refinements to three of the previous design concepts. A majority of the BLPC members expressed support for locating the school building along Wilson Boulevard. In addition, committee members supported further reducing the number of design concepts to two of those proposed, the ziggurat and fanning bars options. A fifth BLPC meeting is scheduled for June 10, 2015. Presentations and meeting notes from each of the BLPC meetings can be viewed on the APS website for the Wilson project, located here: <http://www.apsva.us/Page/29273>

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, listed as follows:

1. Fanning Bars
2. Terraced Courtyards
3. Stepped Terraces
4. Shifting Courtyards
5. Stacked Bars

A diagram of each concept, including how it could be placed in different locations on the site, was presented. The consultants indicated that the same five concepts were shared with the BLPC at their third meeting and that they intend to return with fewer, more refined schemes at the next meeting.

PFRC members discussed the five preliminary concepts presented as well as general siting concerns. Items identified for follow-up included a response to concerns regarding the proposed APS timeline for the project, a request for additional information regarding the amount and types of open space to be provided with each design concept, and a call for further study of the proposed circulation routes for school bus and parent drop-off.