

Stratford School Local Historic District Designation – Process Summary

On March 31, 2015, four individuals—all of whom are former Stratford students, and including one of the four African American students who integrated Stratford in February 1959—requested that the Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (HALRB) consider recommending the creation of a local historic district overlay on the Stratford School property. Stratford School is significant for the following reasons: 1) its historical and cultural significance as the first integrated public school in the Commonwealth of Virginia; 2) its association with the development of public education in Arlington County; and 3) it is a unique and highly successful example of the International Style applied to a school building in Arlington County.

The Stratford School was added to the state's historic register in 2003 and to the National Register of Historic Places in 2004, both of which are honorary listings. The proposed local historic district designation is an attempt to protect this historically significant school. There are multiple upcoming public hearings that will occur as part of the designation process, including the HALRB, School Board, Planning Commission, and ultimately the County Board. If the designation is approved by the County Board, certain exterior alterations to the property will require a Certificate of Appropriateness (CoA) from the HALRB prior to being undertaken. It is important to understand that local historic designation of Stratford will NOT preclude the necessary planned addition to be completed by 2019, nor will it prevent future changes being made to the school. Arlington Public Schools (APS), HPP staff, and the HALRB currently are collaborating on design guidelines specific to the proposed historic district that will allow for the construction of new additions (both Phase 1 and Phase 2) that will be sensitive to and compatible with the historic building.

Two members of the HALRB and a member of the HPP staff have and will continue to participate in the Building Level Planning Committee (BLPC) and the Public Facilities Review Committee (PFRC). At prior meetings of both committees, HPP staff has presented the process of the proposed historic district designation.

The first of at least six public hearings will be held the evening of June 17, 2015, at 7:30pm at 2100 Clarendon Boulevard. The HALRB will hear public comment, will review the historic district designation report to determine if Stratford School satisfies the designation criteria as listed in the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance, and will review the proposed historic district design guidelines. If the HALRB determines that the school satisfies the designation criteria, the HALRB can send its recommendation supporting the designation request forward to the School Board. The School Board will hear the designation request in late summer (dates to be determined) at two separate hearings, first as an information item and then as an action item. The public also will have the opportunity to comment at the School Board hearings.

Once the School Board makes a formal motion on the designation request, the item returns to the HALRB. At that public hearing, the HALRB will consider additional testimony and then will vote whether to send the designation request forward to the Planning Commission and County Board. The Planning Commission and County Board both will hold public meetings where the public will be invited to participate and give comments. Again, the County Board makes the final determination to approve or deny the request for local historic district designation. This hearing most likely will occur at the end of 2015.

To learn more about Arlington's 36 locally designated historic districts – including Swanson Middle School and other civic buildings like the Arlington Post Office– visit the County website:
<http://projects.arlingtonva.us/plans-studies/historic-preservation/local-historic-districts/>

To stay-up-to-date on the local historic district designation process for Stratford, review upcoming HALRB meeting agendas, and read the designation report and design guidelines, visit the HALRB website at:
<http://commissions.arlingtonva.us/historical-affairs-landmark-review-board/>

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