

PUBLIC FACILITIES REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING

DATE: September 2, 2015
TIME: 8:00 – 9:30 p.m.
PLACE: Abingdon Elementary School
3035 S Abingdon Street

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

Staff Members:

Michelle Stahlhut	CPHD – Planning	703.228.3541	mstahlhut@arlingtonva.us
Jane Kim	DES – Planning		
Diane Probus	DPR – Planning		
Justin Falango	CPHD – Planning, Urban Design		
Rebeccah 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 in the conceptual stage and major topics such as building placement, site access and circulation, parking, and historic preservation are currently being discussed. The project budget includes 1,000 seats, however there is consideration being given to 1,300 seats at this site in the future. The School Board is expected to consider selection of a conceptual design at its September 24 public hearing.

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.

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](#) and has not yet scheduled the item for action.

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 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.

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:

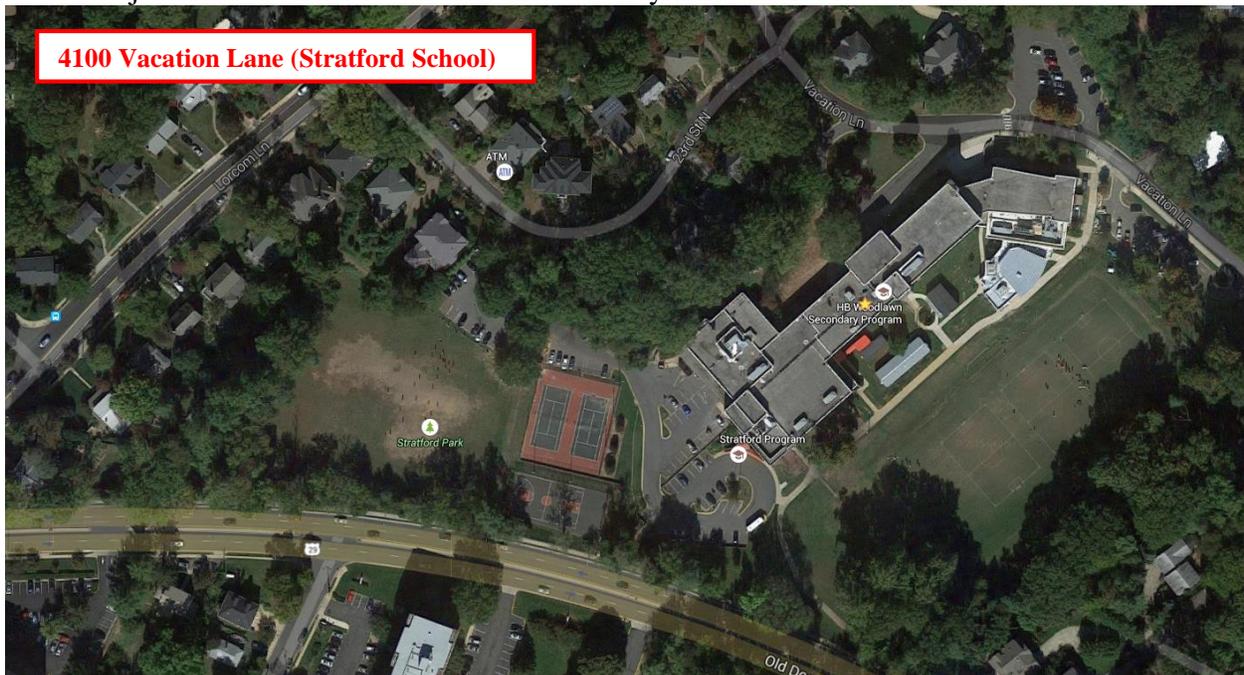
The following provides additional information about the site and surroundings:

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: The APS community process for the Stratford school site began on April 8, 2015. Since that time, the BLPC has met formally seven times and approximately three times informally. The most recent formal meeting was held August 3, 2015. QEA and APS presented their preferred site option as C3, and BLPC eliminated G2 as an option for the site. The next formal BLPC meeting is scheduled just prior to PFRC on August 31, 2015. Presentations and Minutes from publicly noticed BLPC meetings can be found on the [APS Design and Construction: Stratford Middle School](#) website.

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. The project architects Quinn Evans provided a presentation on background information on the history of the site, sustainable school design, and a Toole Design Group transportation planner provided a short overview of the role of transportation analysis for the site. At the July PFRC meeting, County staff gave presentations on the historic designation and Resource Protection Area (RPA) and QEA addressed PFRC questions related to site design and access ([Minutes](#)).

Proposal

The current Stratford school building is approximately 142,000 square feet and services approximately 700 students. The addition of 300 student will require roughly 40,000 additional square feet of education space. Arlington County owns parkland located directly to the west of the school building which includes recreation space as well as the parking area located off of 23rd Street.

Based on the concepts presented to the School Board on August 13, 2015, Arlington County staff continues to have the following comments:

Parks

Stratford Park is located directly adjacent to the school. DPR has completed a design for upgrade of the park but is waiting for the Stratford design process to be complete before moving forward with construction.

Transportation

Safe routes to school

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 capital projects and/or Neighborhood Conservation program to fund infrastructure improvements.

Level of Service (LOS) at Five Points

With site access via Old Dominion Road, there is a concern that the added volumes through the already failing Five Points intersection will make delay times worse for thousands of commuting vehicles. The C2, C2 Alt and G2 access options will increase the delay by 2.5 to over 5 minutes. This is compared to the additional 3 to 15 second increase at the Vacation Lane intersections at Lorcom and Military, respectively, under the A access options.

Old Dominion access usage

Access from Old Dominion to the Stratford school does not necessarily give relief to the traffic on Vacation Lane. There is no way to “force” parent drivers to use a proposed Old Dominion access drive. While there can be signage restrictions (No Parking/Standing/Stopping) along the streets in the vicinity of the school, which does not preclude parents from using Vacation Lane and dropping off along the road or in the existing north parking lot.

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

There is a healthy stand of trees located on the southeast border of the site. The greatest tree impact will depend on what transportation option is selected. The tree impact may be low if there is no new driveway to Old Dominion with access from Vacation lane, moderate with a driveway located near the school, or high if the driveway is located at the far side of the field near the existing stand of trees. Some building options may preclude a driveway closer to the school, which may inadvertently affect the forested edge on the Southeast of the site.

Resource Protection Area (RPA)

The stream and the RPA that protects it are a fundamental site feature/constraint that should be considered during the planning and siting stage. 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 (for example from a parking lot to a structure). Mitigation is requested to offset impacts and with the goal of enhancing the RPA via each development project. Mitigation can take the form of additional stormwater controls or buffer enhancement or both depending on the RPA impacts.



Source: Arlington County DES (draft of approximate RPA)

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.