

Public Facilities Review Committee: Principles of Civic Design

These principles 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. Each project will need to be reviewed individually, and for each project, certain principles may be stressed over others.

Civic Values

- Respect neighborhood context and important historic structures.
- Take advantage of prominent sites and major civic programs to create bold architecture.
- Emphasize leadership in energy conservation and environmental sustainability through architectural design, materials, and construction methods.
- Utilize universal design to ensure open and welcoming accessibility for all citizens.
- Explore adaptive reuse of significant existing structures and building elements and consider possible future reuse of new buildings.
- Optimize open space for public relaxation and recreation, and minimize building footprint and areas used for parking, on-site roads, and service drives.
- Support joint development and use of school and family facilities when in the best interest of both entities.

Siting and Orientation

- Orient the primary building entrance to the appropriate adjacent street or public space so movement and entrance to buildings are natural and intuitive.
- Emphasize pedestrians, bicycles, and mass transit over automobiles in building placement, entry, and architecture.
- Ensure building and site are functionally and spatially coherent, facilitating the flow of people to, from, and within the site.
- Create “positive” outdoor spaces with a pedestrian emphasis.

Building Form

- Develop massing strategies appropriately scaled to the site and neighborhood.
- Use massing to emphasize a pedestrian, human scale to the building, breaking into smaller sub-parts that respond to site and program.
- Develop a sense of hierarchy in the massing, emphasizing and leading to the important functions and spaces in the building, including the entrance.

Building Details and Materials

- Use design details related to pedestrian scale and provide interest, discovery, and character.
- Celebrate the civic nature of the project with public art and iconic architectural elements.
- Use durable and permanent materials to assure longevity of, and civic pride in, the project.
- Appropriately plan budgets to reduce negative design impact of value engineering.
- Explore consistent design elements with other successful Arlington civic projects.
- Design building lobbies to create a sense of place and importance.