

**PUBLIC FACILITIES REVIEW COMMITTEE (PFRC) AND
BUILDING LEVEL PLANNING COMMITTEE (BLPC) MEETING**

DATE: July 27, 2016
TIME: 7:00 p.m.
PLACE: Thomas Jefferson Middle School (Library)
125 S. Old Glebe Rd.

STAFF COORDINATOR: Michelle Stahlhut, 703-228-3541

Site Location:

Thomas Jefferson Middle School
125 S. Old Glebe Rd.
Arlington, Virginia 22204

Applicant:

John Chadwick
Arlington Public Schools
2770 S. Taylor St.
Arlington, Virginia 22206

Architect:

Wyck Knox, Project Manager
VMDO Architects, P.C.
200 East Market Street
Charlottesville, VA 22902

Marco Rivero, Project Manager	CPHD – Planning	703.228.3572	mrivero@arlingtonva.us
Robert Gibson	DES – Planning		
Meliha (Lida) Aljabar	DPR – Planning		
Justin Falango	CPHD – Planning, Urban Design		

SUMMARY: Arlington Public Schools (APS) has begun the Building Level Planning Committee (BLPC) and the Public Facilities Review Committee (PFRC) processes to evaluate a proposed new elementary school building at the Thomas Jefferson Middle School site to house the existing Patrick Henry Elementary School program (located at 701 S. Highland St.). The new school building will provide 725 seats and will open by September 2019. Unique to this process, the new elementary school at the Thomas Jefferson site is being evaluated by the BLPC and PFRC during monthly joint committee meetings with separate BLPC and PFRC meetings scheduled as needed. The BLPC and PFRC processes just ended the conceptual design phase where major topics such as building placement, parking, site access and circulation were discussed. The July 27, 2016 PFRC/BLPC meeting will be the first meeting occurring during the project’s schematic design phase, where the aforementioned topics and others (including but not limited to: transportation improvements, tree replacement/preservation, stormwater management, building design and site design) will be explored further.

BACKGROUND: There are a number of APS and County processes underway with regard to planning the new elementary school at the Thomas Jefferson site, outlined below.

APS CIP Process and the Thomas Jefferson Working Group (TJWG) and South Arlington Working Group (SAWG) Processes

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2015-24 APS Capital Improvements Program (CIP) was approved by the Arlington School Board in June 2014. The CIP called for funding for a new 725-seat elementary school at the Thomas Jefferson site. The CIP identified the cost as \$50,250,000 with school opening September 2018. The Thomas Jefferson Working Group (TJWG) was established to study the site between September 2014 and January 2015. In January 2015, the TJWG issued a report summarizing their findings about the potential for an elementary school at the Thomas Jefferson site and based on this report, the County Board decided not to support moving forward for this school site option. As a result, in June 2015, the South Arlington Working Group (SAWG) was formed to study various sites for a new South Arlington elementary school. The process ran through November 2015, and the SAWG issued a final report including a preference to build a new elementary school for Patrick Henry on the Thomas Jefferson site. In December 2015, the County Board and the School Board School approved the Thomas Jefferson site as the site for a new neighborhood elementary school.

In March 2016, the School Board approved the first three (3) preferences of the SAWG:

- Build a new school for Patrick Henry Elementary School on the Thomas Jefferson site.
- Relocate an existing Montessori Program from Drew Elementary School to the existing Patrick Henry Elementary school site.
- Open approximately 400 seats at Drew Elementary School as a result of the Montessori program relocation.

The new elementary school project at the Thomas Jefferson site will consist of a multi-story elementary school building located on the northwest corner of the property and provide 725 seats. The site will also include a structured parking garage. The layout and design of the site, school building, and parking garage will be determined by APS's Building Level Planning Committee (BLPC) and the County's Public Facilities Review Committee (PFRC) processes.

County/APS Review Process

At a joint work session with the School Board held on February 19, 2016, the County Board endorsed a planning process for the Thomas Jefferson site. The APS planning process for the new elementary school at the Thomas Jefferson site will incorporate the APS BLPC process and the County's PFRC process. Unique to the new elementary school at Thomas Jefferson process, the BLPC and PFRC will hold joint monthly meetings. Separate BLPC meetings are scheduled and PFRC meetings will be scheduled as needed to provide the individual committees more time when discussing certain topics.

The design process includes 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 Arlington Heights and Alcovia Heights Civic Associations, the Arbors of Arlington Condominiums, the Dominion Square Townhouses, and the Dominion Arms Apartments. Other project-specific, representative groups include (but are not limited to): the Sports Commission, the County Fair, Urban Forestry, the Friends of TJ Park, and the APS Facilities Advisory Council (FAC). As part of the joint BLPC/PFRC process, there are four (4) members who are serving as appointees on both committees.

Site Characteristics:

The following provides additional information about the site and surroundings:

Site: The 784,323 square foot or approximately 18 acre site (new elementary school site area and other commonly owned properties related to Thomas Jefferson Park and Community Center) is bound on the north by single family dwellings and Arlington Boulevard, on the east by Thomas Jefferson Middle School and Thomas Jefferson Park and Community Center, on the south by Dominion Arms Apartments, the Dominion Square Townhouses and 2nd Street South, and on the west by the Arbors of Arlington Condominiums and South Old Glebe Road.

Zoning: The site is zoned “S-3A” Special District within the [Arlington County Zoning Ordinance \(ACZO\)](#). 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 ACZO Section §4.1.

Land Use: The site is identified on the [General Land Use Plan \(GLUP\)](#) as “Public”.

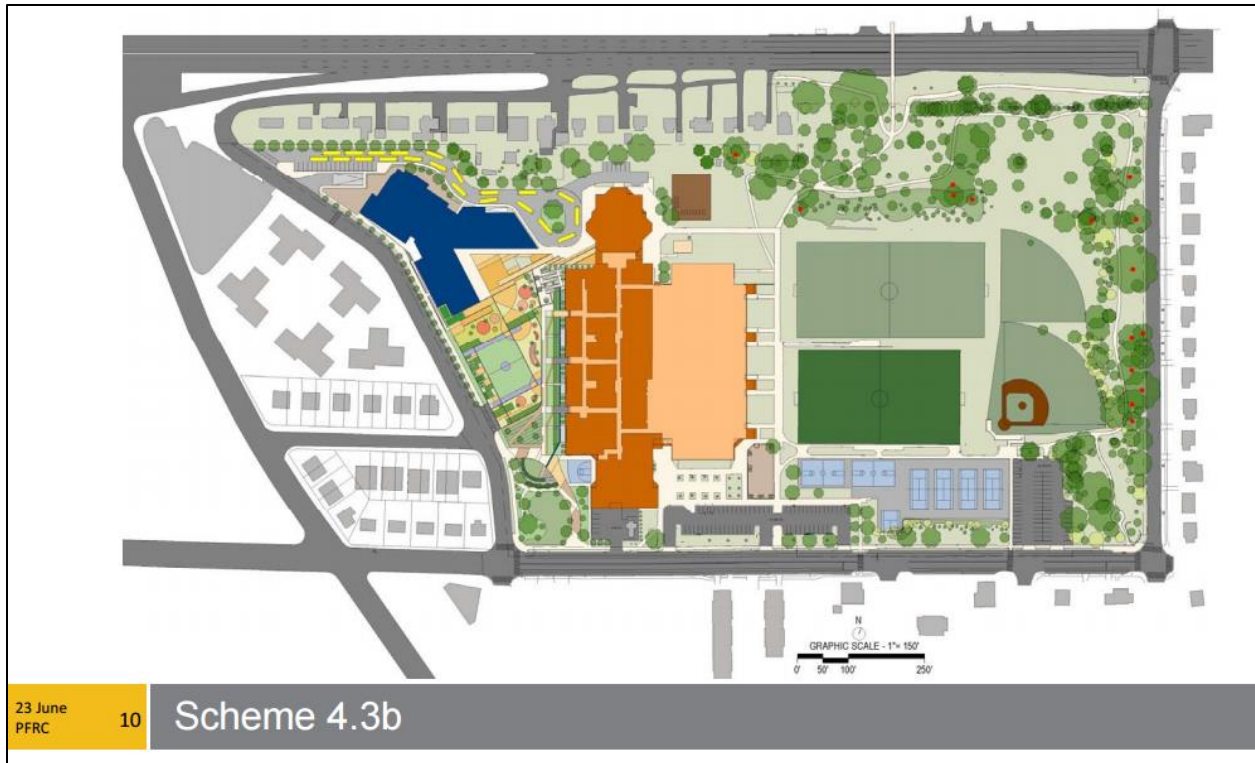
Neighborhood: The site is located within the Arlington Heights Civic Association and is adjacent (to the west) to the Alcovia Heights Civic Association. The PFRC also contains community representation from the Arbors of Arlington Condominiums, the Dominion Square Townhouses, and the Dominion Arms Apartments.



Source: Google Maps

DISCUSSION: The APS community process for the new elementary school at Thomas Jefferson (or NES at TJ) site began on April 20, 2016 with the first joint BLPC/PFRC meeting. Since that time, the BLPC and the PFRC have met separately and jointly, with the most recent joint meeting occurring on June 15, 2016 where an updated version of the concept design was presented. The June 23, 2016 PFRC meeting further refined the concept design. Presentations, meeting notes, and recorded public comments (from the County’s PFRC webpage) can be found on the [APS Design and Construction: New Elementary School at the Jefferson Site](#) website or on the PFRC’s [Thomas Jefferson \(New Elementary School\)](#) website.

At the June 23, 2016 PFRC meeting, the project architects, VMDO Architects provided a [presentation](#) on the project parameters, massing and siting updates for the project, and more refined renderings of the project’s concept design. The PFRC expressed a general preference for the “lobster” design (Scheme 4.3b) as seen below.



However with this general preference, the PFRC did express that APS and design team staff explore the possibilities for:

- A fully underground parking garage (beneath the NES at TJ site).
- Detail any improvements that may be needed to the existing Thomas Jefferson Middle School associated with this project.

The School Board made a motion to approve the final concept design for this project at their [July 20, 2016 meeting](#).

NES at TJ Proposal: Zoning Implications

Staff noted several items that will need to be considered further as the schematic design phase begins for this project. APS and design team staff expressed that the new school building will be between three (3) and four (4) stories tall at certain points. The actual building heights may vary anywhere from 45 to 65 feet.

The Arlington County Zoning Ordinance (ACZO) addresses requirements for building heights and setbacks as the following:

- Height Requirements: ACZO Sections 4.2.3.B. and D. detail the height requirements applicable to school projects within the “S-3A” Special District (the NES at TJ project is located within the “S-3A” zoning district). By special exception, school buildings may have a height of up to 45 ft. By exception in 4.2.3.D., high schools and school

administration buildings that are 19 acres or more may go up to a height of 75 feet, subject to approval of a use permit. Furthermore, development projects within the Western Rosslyn Coordinated Redevelopment District may reach a height not to exceed 175 feet. **The provisions in ACZO 4.2.3.D. do not apply to the proposed NES at TJ.** The current zoning requirements would not support a school project at this height, on this site.

Height Requirements Allowed by Special Exception

B. Special exception

All development allowed by special exception in the S-3A district shall comply with the following standards, except as otherwise approved by the County Board.

Type of Standard	Colleges, Hospitals, and Social Service Institutions	All Other Uses
Lot area, minimum	5 acres	6,000 square feet
Lot width, average minimum (feet)	--	60
Height, maximum (feet)	45	45

Height Requirements and Exceptions Allowed for Schools and School Administration Buildings

D. Exception

The height of schools and school administration buildings may be increased, subject to approval of a use permit, as follows:

1. For high schools and school administration buildings that are 19 acres or more, to a height not to exceed 75 feet, subject to the approval of a use permit.
2. For development projects within the Western Rosslyn Coordinated Redevelopment District as shown on the General Land Use Plan, where the County Board finds that the development project is consistent with the Guiding Principles and other policy guidance in the Western Rosslyn Area Plan, to a height not to exceed 175 feet.

- **Setback Requirements:** ACZO Sections 3.2.6.A.1.(d.) and 3.2.6.A.2.(e.) detail the setback requirements applicable to school projects within the “S-3A” Special District. For all structures in all other districts (“S-3A” would apply), the front yard setback is defined as “50 ft from said centerline but under no circumstances less than 25 feet from any street right-of-way line”. Furthermore, side and rear setbacks for structures in all other districts (“S-3A” would apply) are defined as “10 feet plus one additional foot for each 2 ½ feet, or fraction thereof, of building height above 25 feet, provided that on interior lots no structure shall be located closer than 25 feet from a rear lot line”. **The conceptual site plan shown for NES at TJ appears to be inconsistent with the provisions specified in ACZO 3.2.6.A.1.(d.) and 3.2.6.A.2.(e.).** For a 60-65 foot building, the side/rear setback requirement would need to be approximately 24-26 feet. APS and their design team still need to confirm the distance from the centerline of the street right-of-

way and the setback distances from various points at the site. The current zoning requirements would not support a school project at these setbacks, on this site.

Front Yard Setback Requirement

(d) For all residential structures and all structures in all other districts except for one- and two-family dwellings and their accessory structures regulated by §3.2.5.A.1(e)

50 feet from said centerline but under no circumstances less than 25 feet from any street right-of-way line.

Side and Rear Yard Setback Requirement

(e) For all other residential buildings and for structures in all other districts

10 feet plus one additional foot for each 2 1/2 feet, or fraction thereof, of building height above 25 feet, provided that on interior lots no structure shall be located closer than 25 feet from a rear lot line.

In order to address the ACZO inconsistencies found within this and other similar school projects, the County is exploring potential zoning ordinance amendments to height, setback and parking requirements. Staff will conduct a public process to develop amendments to the ACZO to strategically allow the County Board authority to modify specific regulations for schools, subject to use permit approval, in a manner sensitive to existing and planned adjacent development. This process is in its initial stages and public review will begin in the fall of 2016.

It is important to note that “Appendix A: Guidelines, Conditions and Design Principles” of the Thomas Jefferson Working Group Final Report (dated January 16, 2015), Item #4 specifies that:

“An elementary school or middle school addition should minimally impact the surrounding community:

- a. Any new structure should be designed with multiple stories and a compact footprint. Building massing and height should be consistent with the neighborhood.*
- b. Any development and related driveways and parking areas adjacent to private homes should have adequate setbacks and green buffering to shield neighbors from excessive noise and lights.*
- c. The planning and design of any new elementary school should consider possibilities for future renovation and expansion of the community center and middle school, to ensure those facilities can continue to meet the needs of their respective users into the future.”*

APS and their design team will need to demonstrate during the schematic design phase how the proposed concept design will achieve these points in greater detail.

Staff Comments for the Existing Concept Design

County staff provided initial comments on for the existing concept design that should be explored by APS and the design team as the schematic design phase begins. They include but are not limited to the following points:

- Configuration of the proposed parking garage (exploring if a fully submerged/underground parking garage is possible at this site). This may improve the urban design, security, and views to the site.
- Additional pedestrian crossings from South Old Glebe Road and 1st Road South.
- Tree Replacement:
 - Further APS/design team consideration for the double row of mature trees buffering the houses north of the proposed new elementary school.
 - Is there any way to preserve these trees (or at least some of them)?
 - Explore providing significant tree canopy along the edges of the site, particularly on the parking garage roof.
 - Refrain from using buckets/tree containers (this will reduce the possibility of more tree canopy). Consider using mounded or at-grade soil (will be more cost effective, and provide a more sustainable solution for tree growth.).
 - Consider wider planting areas around the site and also within the pedestrian/recreational connection (50' wide connection) separating the new elementary school from the existing Thomas Jefferson Middle School.
 - Define possible areas where tree replacement may occur on the new elementary school site.
- Stormwater management will need to be considered further as part of the schematic design phase.
- Dense shade on the playground areas should be explored further.
- Transportation (including traffic) improvements throughout the site and any associated intersections (for example at 1st Road South and South Old Glebe Road and at 2nd Street South and South Old Glebe Road). This is related to vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle safety among other things.

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.