



## Joint Facility Advisory Commission March 2017 Roundtables

### Tackling Big Needs Within Limited Space KEY THEMES

April 19, 2017

#### OVERVIEW

The Joint Facilities Advisory Commission (or JFAC) is a new commission comprised of 21 residents, jointly appointed by the Arlington County Board and Arlington Public School Board. JFAC does not represent any one school or neighborhood—but rather are charged with taking a holistic view of the entire county to provide input to the two Boards on capital facilities needs related to schools, parks, recreation facilities and other essential operational and support needs spanning the next 20-30 years. The Arlington County Board has also asked JFAC to focus on some very near term immediate tasks—for decisions coming before the Board in the first half of 2017. These are focused on the Buck Site, Shirlington Road, and the Virginia Hospital Center sites.

Following on the recommendations of the Community Facilities Study, the JFAC hosted a series of 12 community roundtable on *“Tackling Big Needs Within Limited Space.”* These roundtables resulted in 250 residents having a conversation over a month long period with two key objectives; (1) provide education and awareness about the challenges and opportunities facing the County regarding facility and space needs; and (2) gather insights from members of the public to help inform the JFAC’s recommendations for the County and School boards.

This paper includes an overview of the key issues, discussion points, and common themes that surfaced across the County during these roundtable discussions, as well as written submissions collected immediately following the discussions in March 2017.

#### Setting the Stage

At the start of each roundtable, JFAC hosts outlined the JFAC’s key role, the challenges facing the County and the immediate tasks of this new Commission.

*Challenges Facing Arlington County*

- Arlington’s population has grown at an annual rate of approximately 1% over the past three decades and is forecasted to grow by 10.5% or 23,000 new residents by 2026.
- Our school enrollment is also growing and projected to exceed 30,000 students in five years (current enrollment is 26,152), increasing capacity needs.
- With growth comes increased demands for schools, fields, and other services, including essential operational and support services, and land to support these services is desperately needed.
- Essential operational and support services are those services that we don’t have to think about but depend on every day—like clean water, the ability to take a shower, flush our toilet, pave our roads, fill our potholes, provide salt during snow storms, offering transportation—both for the public on ART buses and for our students on yellow buses—as a few examples.
- We are already facing strains and limited space to locate all of the equipment and supplies needed for these essential types of services. And, we must figure out a way to continue our ability to support these services that most of us take for granted every day.
- We also must identify land options that are appropriately-zoned (or can be rezoned) so that we can provide timely support services to the residents and businesses of Arlington County.
- So, the JFAC can’t just focus on one set of needs—but needs to look at the holistic needs of the County over time.

*JFAC’s Task of Helping Arlington County Consider Near-Term Land Options*

- The JFAC is focusing our immediate attention-over the next six months on a few near term land opportunities that are coming before the County Board for a decision in 2017. These sites are being considered as locations for our most urgent siting needs.
- **The Buck Property, on North Quincy Street**, presents a rare opportunity to acquire **6.1 acres of land in North Arlington** that is already zoned for light industrial use.
  - This site has been used for light industrial purposes for decades.
  - The County Manager is in the process of reviewing a proposal for a land swap for part of this land in exchange for additional light industrial land off of **Shirlington Road**.
- The County also has an option to obtain **Virginia Hospital Center (VHC)** property at **601 S. Carlin Springs Road**, or other **VHC-owned properties**, as **compensation** for the **Edison site** adjacent to the hospital.

- We will need to make a recommendation on whether to take the cash or the Carlin Springs site by June/July. JFAC is also planning to bring forward some alternative use scenarios for the properties for further discussion during that timeframe as well.
- **NO DECISIONS** have been made. The JFAC is in the process of learning as much as we can about County needs, school needs, site characteristics and other essential information to help us make our recommendations. AND, we are doing these roundtables and other engagements to gather additional insights from the community.

### Building a Conversation

Each Roundtable was hosted by different JFAC members, where they had the opportunity to focus on five key questions. Over 250 participants included representation from over 45 different Arlington neighborhoods. While individuals had their own unique perspectives, neighbors had the opportunity to listen and learn from other neighbors throughout the process. Participants in every roundtable were asked to address a series of discussion points:

- As JFAC begins this work, what would help the entire County (all of us) begin to think collectively about our competing demands for the limited space available?
- *Buck/Shirlington Road:* As the JFAC puts together a framework for evaluating potential uses for the Buck and Shirlington Sites<sup>1</sup>, what considerations would you like for Commissioners to explore? What are the key challenges and concerns that you would like for them to be aware of as they evaluate potential uses?
- *Virginia Hospital Center:* As JFAC explores the opportunities for the County regarding the Virginia Hospital Center—what suggestions do you have regarding the exchange of cash, land, or some combination of the two?
- What do you think the County should do with the cash and/or land to further address the challenges associated with siting essential operational and support services?
- What is the best way to ensure equitable distribution of space for essential operational and support needs across the County? Given the limited space, in the County, do you have creative suggestions for JFAC to consider?
- How do you think JFAC can best serve the County (and the County Board) for the short term? What about the long term?

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<sup>1</sup> 4MRV Area Plan will complete work before JFAC evaluates potential uses on the Shirlington Road Site.

## EMERGING THEMES

Throughout the discussion, a series of key points emerged for each of the discussion points outlined above and are highlighted in the remaining section of this paper. The following emerging themes surfaced in multiple roundtable conversations:

### Planning

- Need a clear vision from County and School boards—outlining joint county priorities, with a holistic view for the future
- The School and County Boards need to come together to address population growth and the related needs for more schools and related services
- Plan for equitable distribution of essential operational services in both North and South Arlington based on needs
- We must figure out how to engage residents—when there is NOT a crisis, or it's not in their backyard

### Land Acquisition

- Given the shortage of land in the County, take the opportunity to acquire land
- Explore options for building over and/or decking I-66 to expand land options
- Consider acquiring/leasing land outside of the County for storage and parking

### Land Use

- Concerns expressed for placing industrial storage uses close to nearby single family homes and residential neighborhoods
- Address need for increased school enrollment (and seats), child care, and other services needed for growing population
- Consideration for multi-use, co-location, and/or mixed use facilities
- Consider strategies to allow greater creative design options, including building up (not out)

### Neighborhood and Environmental Considerations

- Create and maintain green/open space opportunities
- Consider characteristics of the surrounding neighborhoods and related impacts
- Significant concerns surfaced about the existing traffic congestion and safety challenges on Quincy Street and Carlin Springs Road
- Take environmental factors and impacts into account in identifying land use options

## Key Discussion Points

### *General*

#### ***What would help the entire County (all of us) begin to think collectively about our competing demands for the limited space available?***

##### *General: Long Range Planning*

- Need a clear vision from County and School boards—outlining joint county priorities, with a holistic view for the future
- The School and County Boards need to come together to address population growth and the related needs for more schools and related services
- County and School Boards need to have better coordination for planning

##### *General: Schools Planning*

- JFAC should be involved in school siting for the 1300 seats (noted that both logos are on the agenda).
- Increase in school population and growth requires an increase in student seats.
- Rethink what a school is (does it have to be a suburban large campus)
- Concerns about an additional school at Kenmore on Carlin Springs Road.
- Throughout the roundtables, participants expressed interest in using school lots for bus parking.
- A recurring theme, included building up- not out, in order to preserve green space in the County.

##### *General: Land Acquisition*

- Recognizing that there is limited space, consider leasing empty space (in and outside of the County) for some of the needs facing the County.
- Evaluate what services (storage) can be placed outside of the County.
- Land acquisition is no-brainer; don't take cash [as compensation for the Edison site].
- There is a need to look at the limited land, and important to help. Arlingtonians understand the challenges facing the county.
- Several times during the roundtable, multiple participants expressed 'that when land is available through purchase or swap, the county should strongly consider acquiring it.
- May need to acquire land for schools (like we acquire land for parks).
- What are the assumptions that went into appraisals [for VHC properties] (do the buildings devalue the site)?
- What would \$12 million buy – something better?
- Concern about buying land without plans for use vs. buying land because it's available.

- Consider other private sites that may be for sale (or offer to buy them (I.e.: Federal Bakery site on Lee Hwy.) Purchase land even if there aren't identified uses yet. Inventory sites that the County could make an offer on. Equitably distribute north and south.

*General: Land Use*

- Consider affordable housing as part of the picture.
- Think about County facilities holistically. Need more recreation space. Gymnastics, soccer, and other recreational offerings are over-subscribed and need more space. Think about all facilities – Lubber Run – is it big enough given the needs? Expand Central Library.
- Consider services for the baby boomer generation, that is reaching retirement age and also has needs in the community.
- Think about development in general holistically (ex: Buck, Ed Center, YMCA block, Red Top Cab, Carpool site are all in the same area). Plan for neighborhoods as a whole, not individually. And fight against NIMBY – keep the bigger picture in mind and explain the benefits of siting County facilities (better services, etc).

*General: Preserve Open Space, Trees and Environment*

- Tie together the existing green corridor near Buck – Hayes Park, Hidden Ponds, Cherry Valley – with a green overpass over I-66.
- Protect the green space at Carlin Springs.
- Enhance green space at Shirlington.
- Protect residential neighborhoods as they are an important part of Arlington's character.
- Need open space.
- Need more parkland – and protect current parkland.
- Concern that park land is targeted when there is a need for additional parking, schools, and other services.
- Participants consistently throughout the roundtable discussions encouraged JFAC to take environmental factors and impacts into account.

*General: Urban Development/Density*

- Urban Development—and the related planning started in the 1970s, and continues today. However, it's important to balance urban development with neighborhood residential communities.
- A common theme that surfaced in different roundtables included a request to consider characteristics of the neighborhoods and related impacts.

- Prioritize County needs—to determine land use.
- Look at the needs of the county based on demand, population, density
- Transportation is changing (e.g., more bikes, car-sharing, autonomous vehicles). We may not need as much land in the future to support transportation (storage, etc.); land could be regained for other purposes.
- There is a need to also look at the changing demographics in the County, to include both millennial needs and older adults (baby boomers).
- School crowding, too much busing, too much development and consequences from it (overcrowding); need checks on population growth.

*General: Community Engagement*

- We must figure out how to engage residents—when there is NOT a crisis, or it's not in their backyard. This is difficult. There has to be a way to motivate millennials to stay in Arlington, and offer housing choices that are at a reasonable price point.
- As neighbors from across the County convened for roundtables, they expressed the challenge of having people see Arlington as a whole, not just their neighborhood.

*Buck/Shirlington Road*

- ***As the JFAC puts together a framework for evaluating potential uses for the Buck and Shirlington Sites, what considerations would you like for Commissioners to explore?***
- ***What are the key challenges and concerns that you would like for them to be aware of as they evaluate potential uses?***

*Buck: Land Acquisition*

- Take advantage of the opportunity to acquire land—(Move to first question?)
- Details needed on limitations/constraints of the properties(y) to be able to provide meaningful input – e.g., underground gas lines, zoning, space for school. Also, details on the Arcland proposal (amount of land, usage, height etc.)
- Buck property should be purchased – land needed. However, more information needed to determine *what* it would be used for.

*Buck: Land Use-General*

- Need to focus on getting most bang for the buck – easy-to-maintain buildings, etc. Consider moving things out of the County, such as bus storage. Could the Navy Annex on South Gate be used?
- Concern about locating light industrial storage nearby residential neighborhoods, and maintaining character of neighborhoods

- If swap for Buck is done, want to make sure the remaining part is usable (vs. swapping and giving up the “best part.”)
- Concerns about the location of the Cube Smart (is this the right space).
- Concern about the cost of the Buck site being used for industrial storage
- Use Buck for amenities that serve the community (e.g., Gymnastics center; quality-of-life facilities such the Arc in DC or Imagination Stage built over a parking lot)
- Evaluate the use of land—in relationship to the value/cost.
- The space could be used for athletic fields.
- Consider storage outside of the County for essential operational needs.

*Buck: Co-location*

- Maybe there are some options for using part of the Buck site for low visibility storage.
- A recurring theme that surfaced throughout the roundtables across the county included consider mixed use -with schools, parks, commercial.
- Need a sportsplex – gymnastics, basketball, etc. Buck could provide that space. (1,000 kids use gymnastics at Buck)
- Look at using the Buck property for meeting school needs-and related activities (e.g., fields) Or, other community focused activities.

*Buck: Schools*

- Participants consistently reinforced the important note that any use determination be coordinated with APS determination on 1300 seats and use of Ed Center.
- High school at Ed Center would be too many students in that area.
- Not clear on the status of high school/school decisions – relative to the work of JFAC (short-term/long-term).
- Buck should/could be used for a school, with fields. Could it be rezoned? Also, the “facts” about different properties are needed (e.g., for a high school, what is needed in terms of space, fields etc.) Not good to renovate schools – then have to add trailers.
- School budgets need to include structured parking.

*Buck: Decking/ Tiered Buildings*

- Consider multi-deck parking that is designed to ‘fit’ into the neighborhood (and decking 66 long term).
- There appeared to be a consistent interest throughout the roundtables in exploring options for building over I-66 to expand land option.
- Hayes, Hidden Ponds, cherry valley park - could be put together if you could bridge this over I-66 with a park. Make better use of those under used green spaces. More green space and open space opportunities. Using air rights of I-66 could be very useful and should be evaluated.

- Create direct access to I-66 to reduce the number of service vehicles entering Quincy St.

*Buck: Neighborhood Characteristics*

- Be mindful of the impacts on the surrounding SFH neighborhoods.
- Align use with characteristics of the neighborhood.
- Concerned about locating industrial storage near neighborhoods and single family homes
- Need a Sportsplex – gymnastics, basketball, etc. Buck could provide that space. (1,000 kids use gymnastics at Buck).
- North and South, roundtable participants encouraged JFAC to consider impact on surrounding neighborhoods.

*Buck: Traffic/Safety*

- In almost every roundtable discussion, there was an expressed concern for existing traffic congestion and safety.
- Consider the traffic/safety issues along Quincy and Washington Blvd
- There are already a lot of concerns about traffic congestion and safety on N. Quincy St. and Washington Blvd.
- Traffic—including entry and exits in and out of the Buck property—is a serious concern for the neighborhood, and surrounding areas.

*Buck: Zoning/Cost Needs*

- Consider identifying/rezoning other land for industrial use.
- Respect the easements on the Buck property.
- Difficult to know if solutions are good without information about costs.
- Some did not weigh because costs are needed.

Virginia Hospital Center (VHC)

- ***As JFAC explores the opportunities for the County regarding the Virginia Hospital Center—what suggestions do you have regarding the exchange of cash, land, or some combination of the two.***
- ***And, what do you think the County should do with the cash and/or land if the Agreement is finalized?***

*VHC: School and Long Range Planning*

- Coordination between APS and County is needed.
- Need to ensure that we maintain child care in South Arlington.
- Need to ensure that we maintain urgent care in South Arlington.
- Take a comprehensive look at the school needs and related space and plan accordingly. (not one site at a time)
- Must have a plan to address the growing school growth needs.
- Concern about adding additional school on Carlin Springs Road.
- There is an understanding that additional schools are being considered for this area, possibly involving Kenmore School as well as the Carlin Springs property. Traffic would be a big issue in this area.
- Four schools in small radius would be too much [*if an additional school on the Carlin Spring site*] – it’s a traffic issue and public safety concern.
- Increased space needed for Schools, however, within a mile already have Campbell, Kenmore, Carlin Springs, etc. – infrastructure on Carlin Springs already stretched. Can’t support a fourth school.

*VHC: General Land Acquisition*

- Participants from multiple roundtable discussions identified cash as an option “Cash doesn’t solve the problem – land is needed!” [Carlin Springs] Space/places such as the Madison Center should be considered too.
- Take the land, not the cash. Purchase the CS site while it is available.
- The County should consider taking advantage of picking up the smaller properties while they are available. Utilize these spaces for social service options in the near term.
- Use opportunity to acquire land.
- Support for getting property.
- Generally, believe it’s a good idea to acquire land—if this is an option (Moved this to the 1<sup>st</sup> section).
- Is the swap equitable? How much is the Edison site worth? Is the neighborhood happy with the hospital expansion (yes).
- We need and should acquire land – Lee Highway too, if possible. Think for the long-term and plan for 25 years in the future AND short-term – against a comprehensive list of needs.

*VHC Land Use: General /Other*

- We should go up to preserve green space. Several hands waving for this. Colocation is critical (e.g., senior housing on top).
- Explore opportunities for co-locating and multi-use sites. Also, consider multi-tiered building options.

*VHC Land Use: Carlin Springs*

- What is the usable land at Carlin Springs? Parking lot is a waste of space (VHC staff need parking at the hospital not at remote sites). Protect the natural areas.
- Consider existing needs in County like child care, senior services and schools for the Carlin Springs site.
- In multiple roundtables, it was suggested that the Carlin Springs location could be a good option for a school /park location. Consider converting the existing property to a school at a lower cost than building expensive new schools.
- Consider open space on Carlin Springs site.
- Natural, scenic and ecological areas at Carlin Springs should not be removed/impacted.
- Multiple participants from various roundtables expressed interest in considering environmental factors.

*VHC Land Use: Lee Highway*

- Lee Hwy sites – what could go there – emergency response facilities.
- Lee highway sites are odd shapes and sizes, challenging to determine use options.
- The Lee Highway sites would be helpful—for the County to have as they consider Lee highway redevelopment, including potential for affordable housing.

*VHC Traffic/Safety on Carlin Springs*

- Carlin Springs has significant safety/traffic concerns that will need to be addressed, regardless of purpose
- There was a consistent message that JFAC has to consider traffic on Carlin Springs Road. More development at CS Site would be untenable from a traffic perspective.
- Traffic on Carlin Spring is a concern.

Essential Operational Services (EOS)

***The JFAC is charged with looking at potential locations for ‘essential operational services’, which include finding space that is zoned for light industrial use for parking and storage for critical services (e.g., school buses, art buses, impounded vehicles, material storage (pipes, water mains, etc).***

- ***What is the best way to ensure equitable distribution of space for essential operational and support needs across the County?***
- ***Given the limited space, in the County, do you have creative suggestions for JFAC to consider?***

*EOS: Balance North/South Distribution*

- Consider balancing equitable distribution of services, and potentially thinking about moving elements of the trade center, as opposed to ‘splitting’. For example, can you move mulch and recycling. Leaving buses at the Shirlington Road site—away from residential?
- Consider satellite storage areas for distributing essential support materials in different parts of the County.
- As neighbors from all over the County convened together, they discussed the need to balance essential operational supports.
- It will be helpful to look at how we can put certain services---in North Arlington. not just south Arlington. We should consider having “Trade Center North.”
- Park buses on school lots instead of a central location.
- Ensure these types of uses are spread out in County, not just South Arlington.
- Consider adding additional gas stations or utilizing existing gas pumps to limit drive time for fill up.
- Having essential supports—does not have to be ugly. There are state of the art design options coming on line every day.
- Preserve character of neighborhoods. Put industrial areas near highways.

*EOS: Growth /School Placement*

- Can’t control change, but can we control growth in some ways?
- School growth is very serious; no way to predict if more people in multi-family units will have school children.
- Choice school concept is bad, forces busing (and more buses) and car trips when you can’t attend walkable neighborhood school.
- See what we have available and the limitations on each site.

*EOS: Consider Alternative Spaces*

- Use the under-utilized spaces (under 66, around Spout Run, etc.), sewer switches, Pentagon Parking area, etc. Buses on barges in the River!
- Build over I-66.
- Need to think about leasing and partnerships, in Crystal City and Potomac Yards. Also need comprehensive land acquisition policy. (beyond just in Parks & Rec).
- Look at other available spaces. Can we use land owned by VDOT? Land at Military and Glebe.
- Consider alternative and creative options, including anything that can be moved outside of the County

## JFAC Short/Long Term Considerations

### ***How do you think JFAC can best serve the County (and the County Board) for the short term? What about the long term?***

#### *JFAC: Data Driven Decisions/Prioritizing Needs*

- There is a need to create a prioritized and comprehensive list of needs for the County.
- Need more information on what the County needs. There was a suggestion to list the needs and the sites and look at how the uses might fit on the available land.
- Land should be discussed with the potential uses (Buck has limitations due to utilities). Changes the discussion if you look at limitations -- utilities, environmental remediation, etc.
- Evaluate the real costs and efficiencies that will be saved—in repositioning materials, vehicles, etc.
- Consider data (response time and needs) when making determination about placement.
- Board needs make decisions for the greater good of community (vs. just adjacent neighborhood) – stop dragging things out.

#### *JFAC: Land Acquisition*

- Take advantage of private space, and also out of county space.
- Consider alternative strategies—for placement (including using existing empty space) and school parking lots for bus parking Considerations.
- Buy land – Some expenses are costs; some expenses are investments
- Consider capping I-66.

#### *JFAC: Coordinated Planning*

- During every roundtable, there were multiple participants who expressed an interest in breaking down the wall between County and APS.
- JFAC should think longer term –about the greater needs of the County long term.
- Think holistically about the bigger picture-including density and related impacts.
- Look at overarching priorities-including schools.
- Encourage JFAC to think overall strategically -- not just isolated sites or needs, but think of the whole.
- Don't worry about winning awards with building schools – we're wasting our money; need to be more pragmatic. Don't be afraid to overbuild. (Population here to stay)
- It will be important for JFAC coordinate with other planning processes and commissions.

DRAFT KEY THEMES  
JFAC March 2017 Roundtables

- JFAC should have a say in school siting.
- Break down silos, between Park, schools, etc.

*JFAC: Land Use*

- Use the salt storage site to also service some of the identified operational needs.
- Distribute facilities North and South equitably.
- Consider needs for open space, parking and related needs.
- Think about multi-use options across the County.
- Look at the flexibility of spaces – building schools in flexible ways (in case in the future they need to be repurposed); push to work with federal government too.
- If building new schools, make multi-use and make sure they can transition to other uses in the long run if needed.