



February 1, 2019

The Honorable Reed Goldstein, Chair  
The Arlington County School Board  
Syphax Education Center  
2110 Washington Blvd.  
Arlington, Virginia 22204

*RE: Education Center –Schematic Plan Design*

The Public Facilities Review Committee (PFRC) has held five (5) meetings between September 2018 and January 2019 to consider the Schematic Design for the Education Center, all of which were held jointly with the Building Level Planning Committee (BLPC) to consider Arlington Public Schools' (APS) Schematic Design Plan for the renovations to the Education Center site. In addition, both committees held a site tour and hosted one community meeting. The PFRC consists of representatives from County Commissions, as well as project-specific representatives.

The PFRC's mission is to ensure that the highest quality of land use planning, design, transportation planning, and other important community aspects are incorporated into civic projects as assigned to the Committee by the Arlington County Board. The PFRC uses the Principles of Civic Design (attached) to inform the design of civic facilities in Arlington.

*Site Design and Layout*

The PFRC generally approves of the site design and layout as expressed in the Base Concept, but the majority of PFRC would like to see the Alternate Option which includes an improved, at-grade, multi-use sports court and additional green space.

A few members noted that the design should include a covered walkway from the existing school to the Education Center to provide shelter from the elements for people with disabilities. The members stated that the walkway would not have to connect physically to each building. Members raised concerns that the proposed pick-up/drop off location along the west side of North Quincy Street would create conflict with pedestrians and cyclists. PFRC members suggested that APS should continue to assess alternatives to two pick-up/drop-off options presented by staff, such as allowing for pick-up/drop-off to occur on-site, adjacent to the planetarium. These concerns are addressed more below.

*Alignment with Principles of Civic Design*

As noted previously, the PFRC evaluates proposals as they relate to the Principles of Civic Design. The Education Center Schematic Design proposal and site design comport with several of the Civic Design principles. Several of the principles are not applicable to this project, as the density is already established. The proposal aligns generally with principles that emphasize respecting historic structures, incorporating energy efficient design, exploring the adaptive reuse of existing structures, ensuring universal design, and developing a hierarchy of massing.

The proposal does not align completely with the principle that emphasizes bicycle, pedestrian, and transit modes over automobiles. While the Base Proposal does not align completely with the principle to optimize open space by minimizing building foot print and areas used for

parking, on-site roads, and service drives, the proposal reduces the number of onsite parking slots, designates some parking area for a multi-use athletic court, and provides improved pedestrian connections.

### ***Education Center Building Design***

The PFRC overwhelmingly supports the proposed Building Design Option A for the Education Center. Members expressed appreciation to the design team for its efforts to respond to comments the PFRC and BLPC members made at the meeting on December 19, 2018. PFRC members noted, as well, that the Schematic Design incorporated feedback from Arlington County staff and the public about maintaining the historic appearance of the façade. Members stated that they appreciated the symmetry of Option A, and noted that it responds to the County Board's guidance to respect the building's historic character while also allowing the design to improve the energy efficiency of the building.

### ***Transportation and Streetscape Improvements***

The majority of PFRC supports the Option 1 streetscape improvements for N. Quincy Street, which would enhance the bike lane markings next to the proposed pick-up/drop-off lane on the western side of the street, and the option for the installation of a Rectangular Rapid Flash Beacon (RRFB) at the 14<sup>th</sup> St. North intersection. While a majority of PFRC supports these options, a few members of the Committee expressed concerns about the preferred streetscape options.

### ***Remaining Concerns***

As noted above, a few PFRC members remained concerned about the proposed streetscape design of North Quincy Street, particularly regarding the safety of pedestrians and cyclists. Several members asked staff to relook at the site to see if another pick-up/drop-off location would better address safety concerns.

One member expressed a desire for a HAWK signal instead of a RRFB believing that the HAWK signal would have higher vehicle compliance than the RRFB. While staff acknowledged this finding, data suggests that crash rates increase with HAWK signals. Staff promised to monitor the effectiveness of the RRFB signal to see if additional enhancements were needed for pedestrian safety.

Several PFRC members raised concerns that the proposed street design in Option 1 would increase the likelihood that cyclists would come in conflict with vehicles. PFRC members noted that cyclists may be more likely to get hit with car doors. While the width of the street cross-section makes fitting all uses difficult, a few members encouraged a design that would put the bike lane against the curb and would include physical separation from vehicles such as bollards. In addition, one member suggested that if Option 1 were to remain, that there might be an opportunity to provide signage that could highlight the conflict to drivers and discourage them from opening the driver's side doors into the bike lane.

Other concerns were expressed by various Committee members. These concerns included encouraging APS staff to consider whether pick-up/drop-off could occur on the eastern side of

North Quincy St. and apprehension about the speed limit on Washington Blvd. along the W-L school zone.

***Going Forward***

We look forward to working with APS and the BLPC in refining the design in the use permit phase later this year. The bridge option and Alternate Site Design Option were not fully considered by the two committees. If the School Board chooses to proceed with the bridge option or the Alternate Site Design Option, we would expect that both the PFRC and BLPC would have an opportunity to review these concepts fully. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide the Committee's feedback on this project.

Respectfully submitted,



James Schroll, Chair  
Public Facilities Review Committee

Cc: Mark Schwartz, County Manager  
Samia Byrd, Deputy County Manager  
Bob Duffy, Planning Director, CPHD  
Arlington County Board Members  
Arlington County School Board Members  
Dr. Pat Murphy, Superintendent, APS  
John Chadwick, APS  
Jeff Chambers, APS  
Benjamin Burgin, APS  
Aji Robinson, APS  
Brett Wallace, CPHD  
Nicole Boling, CPHD  
Kris Krider, CPHD

Attached  
[PFRC Charge](#)  
[Principles of Civic Design](#)