



HISTORICAL AFFAIRS AND LANDMARK REVIEW BOARD

Courthouse Plaza One 2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 700 Arlington, VA 22201
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February 3, 2017

Mr. Jay Fiset, Chair and
Members of the County Board
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 300
Arlington, Virginia 22201

Re: Wilson School Use Permit

Dear Chairman Fiset and Members of the County Board:

The Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (HALRB) heard presentations by a representative of Leo Daly architects with representatives of Arlington Public Schools (APS) also in attendance, at our regular meetings on December 21, 2016 and January 18, 2017 directed to the proposed commemoration of the historic Wilson School, to be demolished to build a new school housing the H.B. Woodlawn and Stratford programs on the site. Both the County Board, in conjunction with its denial of the request for a Wilson School local historic in April 2015, and the Western Rosslyn Area Study Plan (WRAPS) required that the new school recognize and commemorate this historically important building to the public and to the students and others using the new school building.

The HALRB is generally supportive of APS and its architects' efforts to include recognition and commemoration of the historic Wilson School in the new school. We appreciate the changes made to the plan after the December 21, 2016 meeting in response to suggestions and comments made by the HALRB on the initial proposal. The proposal presented at the January 18, 2017 meeting, while much improved, still raises some concerns, primarily relating to the visibility of the model of the original historic Wilson School from outside the new school building and accessibility by the public.

The HALRB fully supports the reuse of the tin ceilings from the original Wilson School building in the library of the new school and the placement of a model of the original Wilson School building in a public vestibule location in the library that is closer to the front of the building than previously proposed. The size of the proposed model appears small, however, and HALRB recommends increasing the scale of the model so it will be more visible to the public from outside the building. The model of the historic Wilson School is to be placed on a pedestal, which should be permanently attached to the floor in a location that is both visible from outside the building and accessible to the public. The proposed exhibits near the historic Wilson School model should focus primarily on the original school, the noted architect who designed the original school, and relevant events surrounding the construction and naming of the original school. Although other information, for example the history of Rosslyn, was

proposed for inclusion in a display, this should be included with other topics of historic interest not connected to the original Wilson School in a separate display area in the library. The original historic Wilson School should not be simply a part of a general exhibit, but should be recognized and commemorated as the main attraction of its own exhibit.

The HALRB feels that commemoration of the historic Wilson School external to the new building is also important and supports the location of a historic marker on the Wilson Boulevard side of the new school. The incorporation of the original school cornerstone into the new building was discussed. If the cornerstone cannot be located, providing a facsimile cornerstone as was done when the John M. Langston Center was built, could be considered.

The HALRB looks forward to continuing to work with APS and its architects to ensure that the significant Arlington historic resource that will be lost on this site will be appropriately commemorated so future generations of students and members of the community will know and, hopefully gain an appreciation for, this important part of Arlington's history.

Please feel free to contact me if further information or discussion would be helpful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joan K. Lawrence", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Joan K. Lawrence
Chair, Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board

cc: County Board Members
Planning Commission Members
HALRB Members
Cynthia Liccese-Torres, Preservation Program Coordinator