



URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

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April 3, 2017

The Honorable Jay Fiset, Chair
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

Subject: New Elementary School at TJ

Arlington Public Schools (APS) presented the design for a Use Permit for the New Elementary School at TJ to the Urban Forestry Commission (UFC) at its March 23, 2017 meeting. This project will be the first school with an underground parking garage, as the Community Facilities Commission recommended, allowing the school to be built above it with creative planning for the playgrounds as well. We applaud this new way of conserving Arlington's valuable land by keeping the footprint on the paved parking lot, thus leaving green space for trees.

The Urban Forestry Commission recognizes the great need for additional classrooms and appreciates the effort to keep the entire footprint on land that is already a parking lot, yet there is sadness that - even with this creative design - many trees will be destroyed. A tree census of the building site shows 227 trees of which only 70 will be preserved; 157 trees will be removed and 187 trees will be planted to replace them. Young replacement trees will not provide the benefits of air cleaning, stormwater collection and cooling shade for many years. Arlington's population growth creates unfortunate choices.

The UFC recommends that the County Board support the use permit with the following conditions:

1. Parks Department staff helps ensure appropriate tree species are selected, taking into account foot traffic and other challenges typically found at a school.
2. Tree watering for two years be written into all landscape contracts and closely monitored. Arlington will never achieve the benefits lost from mature trees if the newer ones die.
3. The homeowners along First Street have input in replacing of trees planted to screen their back yards from the bus loop.
4. Arlington County reduces the parking space requirement so the currently paved parking lot at Old South Glebe and 2nd St. South can be reconditioned into green space with trees as APS is willing to do.

Thank you for your attention and consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

Nora Palmatier, Chair
Urban Forestry Commission