



March 21, 2018

The Honorable Barbara Kanninen, Chair  
The Arlington County School Board  
1426 N. Quincy St.  
Arlington, Virginia 22207

*RE: Reed Elementary School –Concept Plan Design*

The Public Facilities Review Committee (PFRC) has now held nine (9) meetings during 2017 and 2018 to consider Arlington Public Schools’ (“APS’s”) Concept Design Plan for a new elementary school at the Reed School site, all of which were held jointly with the Building Level Planning Committee (BLPC). 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.

### ***Reed Elementary Concept Design***

On March 14, PFRC met with BLPC to discuss the recent news that the preferred “Integrated” concept design option for Reed School was no longer being considered due to budget constraints. Recent estimates showed this option to be \$5-6 million dollars above the \$49 million allotted in the 2016 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). The School Board requested feedback on the remaining options that fell within the budget which were the “Bridge” and “Upper-Lower” options.

### **Integrated Concept**

During discussion of these alternate concepts, PFRC overwhelmingly continued to support the “Integrated” design as the best option for the site. As mentioned in the [February 8, 2018, letter](#), PFRC members continue to support the “Integrated” design because it builds up, not out, and pushes the density of the building toward Washington Boulevard. This design preserves open space on the site at a time when there are many competing County priorities. There is increased need for fields and open space, and unfortunately very few opportunities to acquire vacant land. When those opportunities are available, land comes at a premium price. PFRC members noted that the other two concepts, which are discussed more below, do not factor in the price of the lost open space, which, if included, would increase their overall costs significantly. The “Integrated” concept preserves the field and open space on a site that residents consider the heart of the neighborhood.

### **Bridge Concept**

In considering the “Bridge” concept, PFRC members that are jointly appointed to BLPC noted that the functionality of the building for educators is difficult due to the length of the building and the choke point on the bridge. However, these members expressed that they appreciated that it had a smaller floor plate and did not encroach on the field-space as much. Other members expressed a desire to see a more rectangular new building which could possibly make classroom space more useful.

### **Upper/Lower Concept**

In considering this concept, members noted the building pushes into the open space more than and reduces the number of fields at the site. PFRC members expressed that, despite the larger footprint, the “Upper/Lower” concept would function better than the “Bridge” option for educators.

Members noted that having the kitchen facing the street was not ideal and expressed a desire to look for options to improve that design. Members also raised concern about the safety of students outside of the building. PFRC members suggested that a covered walkway or similar type of structure be considered if this concept were chosen.

During the discussion, members expressed a desire to see the design of a four-story “Upper/Lower” concept. PFRC members expressed that such a design could decrease the floor plate, which would preserve open space, while still providing enough area for 725 students on the site. Members noted that the construction cost data provided by APS for the “Integrated” concept showed that the four-story option was only slightly more expensive than the three-story design and were interested to know how the costs would change for the “Upper/Lower” concept.

PFRC members noted that while the “Bridge” and “Upper/Lower” concepts were not as expensive as the “Integrated” option, neither of the other two concepts factors in the cost of the lost open space. Members encouraged APS and the County to factor the cost of lost open space into the overall calculation of each concept.

When faced with option of choosing between the “Bridge” or “Upper/Lower” options, the majority of PFRC members present (6 or 75%) abstained from the choice. Of those that made a choice, one supported the Bridge option and two supported the Upper/Lower – all with the caveat that the “Integrated” option remains the preferred concept over all others. Therefore, PFRC is not be in a position to recommend an alternative at this time.

### ***Updates Since the Last Meeting***

After its last meeting, PFRC has been made aware that at its March 22 meeting, the School Board will hear an informational presentation from staff on its preferred option for the Reed School concept design and that the APS staff will be expressing support for the “Integrated” concept design, with the School Board scheduled to take action at its April 5 meeting. PFRC believes that this is a positive development.

It is rare to have a concept design that receives nearly unanimous support from the PFRC, BLPC, educators, adjacent neighborhoods, civic associations, Schools and County staff, and other interested stakeholders. The fact that these diverse interests are all supporting the same concept design is important and something we encourage the School Board to weigh heavily when making its decision.

The PFRC acknowledges that the “Integrated” design is not the cheapest option, but it fulfills the need to place additional school seats on this site, while respecting wider County goals. It builds up, not out, and pushes the density toward Washington Boulevard, where it exists currently. This results in the most contiguous open space, which saves trees on site, and does not require the use of County land. PFRC encourages the School Board to approve the “Integrated” concept design.

***Going Forward***

We look forward to working with APS and BLPC in refining a schematic design for the site that maximizes use of the site while protecting green space, trees, and walkability while respecting parking and transportation needs of the 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  
Michelle Stahlhut, CPHD  
Nicole Boling, CPHD

Attached

[February 8, 2018 PFRC Concept Design Letter](#)  
[PFRC Charge](#)  
[Principles of Civic Design](#)



February 8, 2018

The Honorable Barbara Kanninen, Chair  
The Arlington County School Board  
1426 N. Quincy St.  
Arlington, Virginia 22207

*RE: Reed Elementary School –Concept Plan Design*

The Public Facilities Review Committee (PFRC) held six (6) meetings during 2017 and 2018 to consider Arlington Public Schools’ (“APS’s”) Concept Design Plan for a new elementary school at the Reed School site, all of which were held jointly with the Building Level Planning Committee (BLPC). 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.

*Reed Elementary Concept Design Review*

During the most recent meeting on January 24, the PFRC was asked to rank six concept designs from most preferred (1) to least preferred (6). The PFRC overwhelmingly ranked the “Integrated” design as the most preferred design and the remaining five designs received scattered rankings overall. It was clear from the ranking exercise and the PFRC discussion that the “Integrated” design far outweighed all the other designs in terms of preference.

The following discussion is arranged in order of PFRC preferences and reviews the proposed concept designs in context of the Principles of Civic Design and County-wide perspective that PFRC brings the school review process.

***Integrated Design***

This design is the clear preference of the PFRC. The Integrated concept design proposes partial removal of the existing structure and replaces it with a four-story building with 732 seats. PFRC is mindful of the fact that the current school was constructed recently, but still believes that the Integrated concept design is the best choice.

PFRC members support this design because it builds up, not out, and pushes the density toward Washington Boulevard, where it exists currently. This results in the most contiguous open space, which saves trees on site, and does not require the use of County land. PFRC members noted that while the existing building is not old, it was built with much younger students in mind, and would not function well for older students.

Some PFRC members expressed concern about the removal of a building that is not ten years old yet. Others stated some concern that the Integrated concept design was the highest cost per seat.

### ***Bridge***

After the Integrated concept design, which is the overwhelming choice, PFRC members showed a slight preference for the Bridge concept over the Upper/Lower design. In the Bridge design, a new school would be constructed along 18<sup>th</sup> Street with a bridge to a new second story that would be constructed on the existing school. PFRC members appreciated that adding a second story on the existing school could limit the floor plate of the new structure. PFRC appreciated that this option did not extend as much into the open space as the Upper/Lower or Standalone concept designs and did not require County property. PFRC members did raise concerns about the functionality of a bridge and whether this could create choke points. County staff raised issues about the proposed bridge, noting that it is over an existing utility easement. While not strictly prohibited, PFRC members noted that bridging over an easement could create other limitations.

### ***Upper/Lower***

The Upper/Lower concept design would construct a new school for upper grades along 18<sup>th</sup> Street and would keep the existing school for lower grades. PFRC members noted that this choice retains the use of the existing building and does not use County land. While there is a medium loss of open space with this option, the Upper/Lower design does push into the open space as much as the Standalone design, which was a concern of several PFRC members.

The Standalone, East, and North concepts gathered the least support among the PFRC members. These concepts received about half the support of the Bridge and Upper/Lower concepts, and roughly a third of the support given to the Integrated concept. As discussed below, the majority of PFRC members do not believe that any of these three concepts would be practical options for the new elementary school.

### ***Standalone***

The Standalone concept design proposes a new building on the site and the existing Reed building would remain. The new structure would accommodate approximately 732 seats and the existing building could be used to accommodate additional preschool students bringing the total seats at the site up to 1,000 seats.

The joint committee has had much discussion on the topic of increasing the number of seats to 1,000. Some PFRC members pointed out that the County is struggling to provide seats for students and this proposal provides an opportunity to maximize use of the site, however others have suggested 1,000 is too many seats for this site.

The majority of PFRC members were concerned with this design concept and did not believe it was a practical option because it has the largest floor plate and uses County land. Members noted that the library used to be in this location, but has been removed, and expressed concern that a new structure would be placed in that area of the site. PFRC members also expressed concern about the preservation of a Champion tree on this end of the site, if this option were chosen.

A minority of PFRC members believed that the Standalone concept should be supported because it preserves the investment in the existing building, offers the most seats of any of the concepts, and provides the lowest cost per seat.

### ***North***

The North concept design proposes to build a second story on the existing school and construct an addition that extends north into the adjacent hill behind the school. PFRC members opposed this concept because the North concept design would require the removal of too many trees on the hill. In addition, neighbors noted that many area children play on the hill that would be used to develop the school under this design. Lastly, members noted that providing fire access for this concept would be pose a significant challenge, which makes the North concept design not desirable.

### ***East***

The East concept design would construct a new school into the hill on the northeastern portion of the site along N. Lexington Street. The school would provide classrooms for older elementary school students, while the existing school would provide space for lower grades. This option has been included because it is the cheapest design, but it is not supported by PFRC members.

PFRC is concerned that the East concept design would be constructed into the neighborhood's sledding hill. Members also raised issues about increased impervious surface for parking along N. Lexington Street, which is green space currently. While other design concepts propose separate schools (e.g. Upper/Lower), PFRC members expressed concern about the logistical challenges that might arise because of the distance between the proposed new East building and the existing school. Members also raised questions about whether certain functions (e.g. cafeterias) would need to be duplicated because of the distance in building separation, which could add unnecessarily to the building's floor plate.

### ***Other Issues***

#### ***Parking - Design***

Several of the current design proposals call for additional parking lots either on the sledding hill, on the corner property owned by the County which contains a Champion status tree, or in front of the proposed new building which pushes the building further into the existing open space. PFRC encourages APS to continue to explore creative parking solutions that minimize use of open space for parking such as a parking deck

located above the existing rear surface parking lot, or underground parking beneath the proposed building.

*Transportation*

There are outstanding transportation questions related to on-site circulation, pick-up and drop-off, access to VDOT controlled Washington Boulevard for access to a proposed parking deck, and the effect to the surrounding transportation network. PFRC looks forward to taking part in these ongoing conversations and encourages APS and its traffic consultant to work collaboratively with all parties throughout the process.

***Going Forward***

PFRC looks forward to working with APS and BLPC in refining a schematic design for the site that maximizes use of the site while protecting green space, trees, and walkability while respecting parking and transportation needs of the 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  
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Attached  
[PFRC Charge](#)  
[Principles of Civic Design](#)

## **Public Facilities Review Committee: Principles of Civic Design**

These principles are intended to inform the design of civic facilities in Arlington, including buildings and other projects, to ensure they meet community goals for attractiveness, durability, and functionality. The principles reinforce and supplement existing County planning documents and policies, and are meant to promote compliance with certain basic principles, but not to inhibit creative design. Each project will need to be reviewed individually, and for each project, certain principles may be stressed over others.

### **Civic Values**

- Respect neighborhood context and important historic structures.
- Take advantage of prominent sites and major civic programs to create bold architecture.
- Emphasize leadership in energy conservation and environmental sustainability through architectural design, materials, and construction methods.
- Utilize universal design to ensure open and welcoming accessibility for all citizens.
- Explore adaptive reuse of significant existing structures and building elements and consider possible future reuse of new buildings.
- Optimize open space for public relaxation and recreation, and minimize building footprint and areas used for parking, on-site roads, and service drives.
- Support joint development and use of school and family facilities when in the best interest of both entities.

### **Siting and Orientation**

- Orient the primary building entrance to the appropriate adjacent street or public space so movement and entrance to buildings are natural and intuitive.
- Emphasize pedestrians, bicycles, and mass transit over automobiles in building placement, entry, and architecture.
- Ensure building and site are functionally and spatially coherent, facilitating the flow of people to, from, and within the site.
- Create “positive” outdoor spaces with a pedestrian emphasis.

### **Building Form**

- Develop massing strategies appropriately scaled to the site and neighborhood.
- Use massing to emphasize a pedestrian, human scale to the building, breaking into smaller sub-parts that respond to site and program.
- Develop a sense of hierarchy in the massing, emphasizing and leading to the important functions and spaces in the building, including the entrance.

### **Building Details and Materials**

- Use design details related to pedestrian scale and provide interest, discovery, and character.
- Celebrate the civic nature of the project with public art and iconic architectural elements.
- Use durable and permanent materials to assure longevity of, and civic pride in, the project.
- Appropriately plan budgets to reduce negative design impact of value engineering.
- Explore consistent design elements with other successful Arlington civic projects.
- Design building lobbies to create a sense of place and importance.



## **PUBLIC FACILITIES REVIEW COMMITTEE CHARGE**

### **I. MISSION**

The Public Facilities Review Committee's (PFRC) 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.

### **II. SCOPE OF DUTY FOR PUBLIC FACILITIES REVIEW COMMITTEE**

PFRC is being formed as a mechanism for advisory commissions and committees to have timely input on the development of significant County and School projects prior to the formal submittal of the project for public hearings held by the Planning Commission and County Board.

The major responsibilities of the PFRC are the following:

- Provide a forum in which the Planning Commission, citizens' community groups, advisory commissions and committees can have a dialogue with the project lead and other staff to review, discuss, and comment on any important public facility project.
- Ensure that the highest quality of land use planning and design is incorporated into development projects; Promote compliance with the County's Comprehensive Plan, other planning documents and County policies; Address community concerns and goals.
- Help inform commissions and the County Board on the outstanding issues with regard to a specific plan and any conditions which it might determine to be necessary or appropriate to address those issues.
- Provide an efficient means for broad-based public participation, precluding the necessity of multiple presentations to and reviews by each individual commission during the development phase. The PFRC provides the forum for everyone to be heard during the development of the public facility.
- Provide advice to the County Board and County Manager in the development of the Capital Improvement Program.

It is not the purpose of the PFRC to address programmatic needs and interior design; however it may be necessary to discuss the interior/layout as it may impact the exterior, placement, or massing of the building.

### **III. MEMBERSHIP**

The Committee members are recommended by their respective Commissions and, with the exception of Planning Commission members, are appointed by the County Board for staggered two year terms. Appointees may be current or past members of Commissions. The Committee is composed of the following members:

1. **Planning Commission**-three members appointed by Planning Commission; one of which shall be designated by County Board as Committee Chair
2. **Transportation Commission** – one member
3. **Citizens Advisory Commission on Housing** – one member
4. **Park and Recreation Commission** – one member
5. **Disability Advisory Commission** – one member
6. **Environment and Energy Conservation Commission** – one member
7. **Fiscal Affairs Advisory Commission** – one member
8. **School Board Nominees**- two members
9. **At Large Members** – three members
10. **Project-Specific Membership**
  - For each project, the PFRC Chair may designate additional PFRC membership in consultation with staff and the County Board.
  - When multiple projects are under consideration and workload demands warrant it, each of the commissions listed in 2-7 above may appoint one

additional member to serve as the commission's representative on each additional project to ensure that each project has consistent commission representation.

- The PFRC Chair may appoint a PFRC member from the Planning Commission to serve as chair of the PFRC for a specific project when multiple projects are under consideration.

#### **IV. PFRC ROLES**

##### **1. PFRC Chair**

A Planning Commission member is appointed as the PFRC Chair by the County Board.

###### **1.1. The PFRC Chair's Scope of Duties are as follows:**

- Coordinate meeting schedule with the County's Public Facilities Review Coordinator.
- Work with County's Public Facilities Review Coordinator, County Staff, and Arlington Public Schools staff to develop/review the Operating Guide for the PFRC.
- Report to the Planning Commission on the overall activity and workload of the PFRC.
- Manage and oversee the committee (e.g., providing for training of new PFRC members; etc.).
- Assist staff in the development of the meeting agendas and in identifying project-specific PFRC members.
- Meet with staff and the project lead/manager in advance of the first PFRC meeting to establish an agenda for review of the project.
- Chair the project meeting and use PFRC time efficiently by keeping the meeting on track and focused on the agenda, and controlling revisiting of issues.
- Provide a project report to the Planning Commission 5 days prior to the public hearing for that project.

##### **2. All PFRC Members**

- 2.1 Regular attendance at meetings is necessary to maintain continuity of common understandings and create a productive environment for discussion and deliberation. Members should make a commitment to attend as many PFRC meetings as possible.
- 2.2 PFRC commission representatives are responsible for communicating the status of the PFRC activities with the constituencies they are appointed to represent.

##### **3. Staff**

County staff plays two distinct roles in public projects: 1) as project developer and 2) as project reviewer. In addition, the PFRC will have a Staff Coordinator appointed to provide support to the Committee. These roles are better defined below:

- 3.1 **PFRC Coordinator:** The Coordinator of the PFRC will be designated by the County Manager and will be separate from the project lead/project manager. The Coordinator will work with the PFRC chair to provide summaries of meetings that can be distributed to members of the Committee, County Commissions, and other stakeholders.
- 3.2 **Review Staff:** The Review Staff will be responsible for reviewing the project for consistency with applicable County Codes, Plans and Policies and will be separate from the Project Lead/ Manager.
- 3.3 **Project Lead/Project Manager:** The Project Lead is responsible for developing and managing the project design process as well as presenting the project to the PFRC. Typically the project lead will be in either the Arlington Public Schools or County Facilities Design and Construction group. The presentations may also actively involve any public advisory committee that is working on the

development of the project (such as the Building Level Planning Committee BLPC), since a large part of the first and second meetings are intended to help inform the project committees of broader community issues.

## **V. PFRC MEETINGS**

The goal of the PFRC is to accomplish its mission in a minimum of three meetings. Additional meetings may be held based on consultation with the County Board and School Board (for school projects). The three meetings are as follows:

### **1. First Public Facilities Review Committee Meeting**

The first PFRC meeting on any project shall occur at the beginning of public discussion of a public facility, once the County Board and/or the School Board have determined the scope of the project. A BLPC or other project development committee may have been established and had initial meetings; however, it is intended that the first meeting of the PFRC occur as early in the process as possible so that the project development committee is well-informed of issues, concerns, or constraints.

### **2. Second Public Facilities Review Committee Meeting**

The second meeting will occur once the initial conceptual design options are developed for the public facility. It is to frame choices among viable options and explore with greater specificity the impacts of the conceptual designs in areas covered by the PFRC.

### **3. Third Public Facilities Review Committee Meeting**

The third meeting will occur once a project design is ready for submission to the County Board for use permit or site plan approval. Drawings and plans must be in sufficient detail to enable a full understanding of the project. Requirements for a 4.1 site plan submission serve as a general guide. The meeting will occur in advance of consideration of the use permit or site plan by relevant commissions and the results from the PFRC should help inform discussion at the commission meetings.

## **VI. PFRC OPERATING GUIDE**

The County Manager will issue an Operating Guide for outlining the process of the Committee, subject to input from County Commissions, Schools, and Staff. The Operating Guide may be reviewed periodically as necessary by staff or PFRC members.