

Saturday 27 May 2023

The Honorable Christian Dorsey, Chair  
Arlington County Board  
2100 Clarendon Boulevard  
Arlington, VA 22201

RE: Use Permit Application (UPER23-00012) for the Arlington Career Center Project

Chair Dorsey and Members of the Arlington County Board:

We wish to advise the County Board that the concerns conveyed to you in the Arlington Heights Civic Association letter to the County Board (10 May 2023; copy attached) and that of the Douglas Park Civic Association (22 May 2023; copy attached) are shared by the majority of Pike leaders represented by the Pike Presidents' Group (PPG). The PPG is supportive of APS's plans to upgrade the Career Center site, a major public facility adjacent to Columbia Pike. We believe this a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to re-vision the parcel and provides an impetus to our long-sought goal of relocating to the Columbia Pike Branch Library to the Pike itself.

However, the current APS plans, while ambitious, cut corners in ways that are unacceptable to the community and contrary to the our shared vision of a safe and equitable Arlington. We strongly urge the Board to require compliance with current County standards for sidewalks, streetscapes, and impervious coverage; require replacement of lost public amenities and green space through the demolition of the former Patrick Henry Elementary building; ensure that the resulting amenities are both inviting and accessible by the community after school hours; and require that all construction comply with Arlington's best practices for impacts on both the environment and neighboring residential usages.

APS's plans for the Career Center site contemplate a daily population of over 2,500 students, along with teachers, administrators, and necessary support staff; all this in addition to the residents of the Pike and their day-to-day activities. In short, this will be a dense, active space. We ask you to ensure that this process of delivering a much-needed upgrade to the site benefits the Pike community in general while meeting the requirements of Arlington Public Schools.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Adam R Henderson,  
Chair, Pike Presidents' Group (PPG)

*Alex Stevens  
President, Alcova Heights Civic Association*

*Kristi Rupert Sawert, Ph.D. and Brian Sigritz  
Co- Presidents, Arlington Heights Civic Association*

*Ronald Greene  
President, Arlington View Civic Association*

*Diana Baron,  
President, Columbia Forest Civic Association*

*Ron Haddox,  
President, Columbia Heights Civic Association*

*Steve Jordan Tomaszewski  
President, Douglas Park Civic Association*

*Jacob Yanofsky  
President, Foxcroft Heights Civic Association*

*Alex Sakes,  
President, Penrose Neighborhood Association*

cc: Arlington County Planning Commission



Arlington Heights Civic Association  
Arlington, VA 22204

May 10, 2023

Honorable Christian Dorsey, Chair  
Arlington County Board  
2100 Clarendon Blvd.  
Arlington, VA 22201  
cdorsey@arlingtonva.us

Re: Use Permit Application (UPER23-00012) for the Arlington Career Center Project

Dear Mr. Dorsey,

We are writing on behalf of the Arlington Heights Civic Association (AHCA) regarding Arlington Public School's (APS) Use Permit application (UPER23-00012) for the Arlington Career Center Project located within the Arlington Heights neighborhood.<sup>1</sup> The Use Permit application is rapidly moving through County review. We have serious and ongoing concerns about the following issues that, to date, APS has not addressed. We ask that the County Board require these concerns be addressed before approving the Use Permit application.

- 1. Ensure final condition is limited to two school buildings.** The final condition of the current Use Permit application delivers three buildings—the new Arlington Career Center (ACC) building, the legacy Career Center building, and the Patrick Henry building, which is home to the Montessori Public School of Arlington (MPSA). Although we support constructing the new ACC building for Career Center/Arlington Tech students and refurbishing the legacy Career Center building for MPSA students, we cannot support a final condition that leaves three large buildings with inadequate green/open space.

The Use Permit application should be revised to show a final condition of no more than two buildings and appropriate green/open space at the site of the former Patrick Henry building. APS has set the expected combined enrollment of the Career Center and MPSA to 2570 students, and we believe the site is not able to support any students beyond this number.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Arlington Heights is one of the oldest neighborhoods in Arlington County and is home to over 1,000 households living in single-family homes, historical duplexes, multi-family housing, condominiums, and apartments.

<sup>2</sup> The School Board has set a maximum capacity of 2570 students, which appears to be based on 1795 ACC students and 775 MPSA students. *See, e.g.,*

2. **Ensure final condition delivers adequate green/open space and replaces identified public facilities.** The final condition of the current Use Permit application lacks sufficient open/green space, appears to substantially increase impervious surfaces, and removes several community amenities identified in the Arlington Public Spaces Master Plan (e.g., diamond field, basketball court, large open green space, and two playgrounds).<sup>3</sup> We want to ensure that the green/open space lost to the new ACC building is replaced at the northwest corner of the site, and, to the greatest extent possible, the final condition of the Use Permit includes community facilities available to the public after school hours.
3. **Ensure proper fencing and after-hours access to playgrounds.** We are particularly concerned that the final condition of the Use Permit delivers play areas that will be behind six-foot fencing along the corner of South Highland Street and continuing eastward on 7<sup>th</sup> Street South. Six-foot fencing is inconsistent with the vast majority of other playgrounds at APS school sites,<sup>4</sup> unwelcoming to the public, and inconsistent with the Public Spaces Master Plan.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the current six-foot fencing also has a documented history of being locked after school hours.

Although we are not asking for the current six-foot fencing to be removed, *we are asking that any new fencing* is limited to four feet in height, which is appropriate for the site.<sup>6</sup> Access to playgrounds within a 5-minute walk is an important equity issue, especially for children living in an urban area. The children living in Fillmore Garden Apartments, for example, have no community play structures and therefore heavily use the playground located across South Walter Reed Drive. We want to ensure that children living in Arlington

---

[https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/arlington/Board.nsf/files/C88QF26869B7/\\$file/G-1%20CIP%20Direction-%20Presentation.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/arlington/Board.nsf/files/C88QF26869B7/$file/G-1%20CIP%20Direction-%20Presentation.pdf) (slide 12).

<sup>3</sup> See Arlington Public Spaces Master Plan (adopted April, 2019) (“PSMP”), p. 182 (setting forth access standards for community amenities), available at <http://arlingtonparks.us/psmp/main/mobile/index.html>.

<sup>4</sup> For example, the fencing surrounding the playgrounds at Alice West Fleet elementary school—also located in Arlington Heights—are four feet in height. Although we understand that MPSA has a large number of pre-K students, several other South Arlington elementary schools have similar numbers of preschoolers: MPSA (105 pre-K), Hoffman-Boston (83 pre-K), Dr. Charles R. Drew (84 pre-K), Carlin Springs (96 pre-K), Alice West Fleet (78 pre-K). Pre-K enrollment data available at [https://www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/U-Mem\\_281\\_Membership-SummaryAll.pdf](https://www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/U-Mem_281_Membership-SummaryAll.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., PSMP, p. 53 (setting forth equitable access for recreation, including on “school grounds and fields,” as the PSMP’s first “strategic direction”).

<sup>6</sup> Arlington County classifies both South Highland Street and 7<sup>th</sup> Street South adjacent to the Patrick Henry building as “neighborhood minor” streets. See <https://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2019/07/StreetFunctionalClassif.pdf>. The County identifies South Old Glebe Road (location of Alice West Fleet) as “neighborhood principal.”

Heights and the surrounding neighborhoods have equitable access and opportunity to use the new playgrounds.

**4. Ensure proper sidewalks and streetscapes around the entirety of the Career Center site.**

The final condition of the Use Permit delivers sidewalks around the current Patrick Henry building that do not comply with Arlington County's streetscape standards, even though APS plans to disturb the ground adjacent and around these sidewalks. We want to ensure the sidewalks are wide enough for the several thousand people (students, staff, parents, etc.) who will be using the Career Center site daily. We ask that the Use Permit be revised to include proper sidewalks around the *entirety* of the Career Center site. Relatedly, we ask that the use permit include proper streetscaping around the *entirety* of the Career Center site. At a recent public hearing, APS stated that they do not want to "waste taxpayer money" to improve the sidewalks/streetscaping around the entirety of the site; however, this approach is wholly inequitable.

**5. Ensure the entire Career Center site meets appropriate environmental standards.** It is unclear from the Use Permit application whether the final condition complies with Arlington County's high standards for environmental design. For example, it does not appear that the new ACC building will be built to the same environmental standards as other recently built schools, such as Cardinal Elementary, the Heights Building, and Alice West Fleet Elementary. Moreover, the impact of the final condition on biophilic design, stormwater management, and impervious surfaces does not appear to have been addressed in the final condition of the Use Permit application.

**6. Parking garage condition.** We appreciate APS's hard-working and dedicated teachers and staff, and are glad that they will have a place to park on the Career Center site. We want to ensure the parking garage has adequate parking to meet identified needs. Additionally, we want to make sure the parking garage meets a high architectural standard, including having conditions in the Use Permit application ensuring the exterior shields the nature of the parking garage while providing adequate light.

The Arlington Heights neighborhood is currently home to more public schools than any other neighborhood in Arlington County: Alice West Fleet Elementary School, Montessori Public School of Arlington, Thomas Jefferson Middle School, Arlington Career Center (including Arlington Tech), and the Arlington Community High School. We are proud of our close ties with APS, and have been supportive of the wide array of schools that are part of our community. That said, we continue to have serious and ongoing concerns with the Use Permit application that should be addressed. We are happy to discuss our concerns further, and to answer any questions that you may have.

Thank you for your consideration,

*Kristi Rupert Sawert*

Kristi Rupert Sawert, Ph.D.  
 Co- President,  
 Arlington Heights Civic Association  
[ahca.ksawert@gmail.com](mailto:ahca.ksawert@gmail.com)

*Brian Sigriz*

Brian Sigriz  
 Co-President,  
 Arlington Heights Civic Association  
[ahca.bsigriz@gmail.com](mailto:ahca.bsigriz@gmail.com)

cc:

Hon. Libby Garvey, Vice Chair Arlington County Board <a href="mailto:lgarvey@arlingtonva.us">lgarvey@arlingtonva.us</a>	Hon. Takis P. Karantonis Arlington County Board <a href="mailto:tkarantonis@arlingtonva.us">tkarantonis@arlingtonva.us</a>
Hon. Matt de Ferranti Arlington County Board <a href="mailto:mdeferranti@arlingtonva.us">mdeferranti@arlingtonva.us</a>	Hon. Katie Cristol Arlington County Board <a href="mailto:kcristol@arlingtonva.us">kcristol@arlingtonva.us</a>
Hon. Reid Goldstein, Chair APS School Board <a href="mailto:reid.goldstein@apsva.us">reid.goldstein@apsva.us</a>	Hon. David Priddy, Career Center Project Liaison APS School Board <a href="mailto:david.priddy@apsva.us">david.priddy@apsva.us</a>
Devanshi P. Patel, Chair Planning Commission <a href="mailto:devanshipatelarlington@gmail.com">devanshipatelarlington@gmail.com</a>	Chris Slatt, Chair Transportation Commission <a href="mailto:chris@dodgersden.com">chris@dodgersden.com</a>
Shruti Kuppa, Chair Park and Recreation Commission <a href="mailto:Shruti.kuppa@gmail.com">Shruti.kuppa@gmail.com</a>	Daniel Weir, Chair Form Based Code Advisory Working Group <a href="mailto:danielweirarlington@gmail.com">danielweirarlington@gmail.com</a>
John Mingus, Chair Sports Commission <a href="mailto:jmingus11@gmail.com">jmingus11@gmail.com</a>	Stacy Snyder, Chair Joint Facilities Advisory Committee <a href="mailto:stacyasnyder@yahoo.com">stacyasnyder@yahoo.com</a>
Joan McIntyre, Chair Climate Change, Energy and Environment Commission <a href="mailto:jfmcintyre57@gmail.com">jfmcintyre57@gmail.com</a>	Elizabeth Priaux, Chair Disability Advisory Commission c/o <a href="mailto:csales@arlingtonva.us">csales@arlingtonva.us</a>
Sarah Steinberger, Chair Public Facilities Review Committee <a href="mailto:arlpsteinberger@gmail.com">arlpsteinberger@gmail.com</a>	



Honorable Christian Dorsey, Chair  
Arlington County Board  
2100 Clarendon Blvd.  
Arlington, VA 22201  
[cdorsey@arlingtonva.us](mailto:cdorsey@arlingtonva.us)

Dear Mr. Dorsey,

I am writing on behalf of the Douglas Park Civic Association regarding Arlington Public School's Use Permit application (UPER23-00012) for the Arlington Career Center Project located near the Douglas Park neighborhood. The Douglas Park neighborhood is Arlington County's third largest neighborhood by area, and fourth largest neighborhood by population. Our main concern with this project at this time is how the multi-year construction process will impact access to local parks for residents, and the spillover effects to nearby neighborhoods like ours in Douglas Park.

It is our understanding that the playground associated with the Montessori Public School of Arlington will be unavailable for use for years to come as this project moves forward. The current public playground is one of few options for families in the immediate area, to include many residents in affordable housing directly to the East of the site. Families will be forced to look to nearby parks and playgrounds to enjoy, and as an adjacent neighborhood we feel our parks infrastructure will be stressed with increased usage for years.

While we are usually supportive of welcoming our neighbors in need into Douglas Park, our two major parks – Douglas Park and Monroe Park, have been neglected for decades and are long overdue for an update. Last year the Arlington County Department of Parks and Recreation promised to start community engagement in order to begin the next steps of design for these two parks, where funding has been allocated by the County. Unfortunately, engagement has not started yet and there is no plan in place for these parks to be updated. This is especially troubling as the parks are not compliant with standards with the Americans with Disabilities Act, so differently abled kids will not be able to enjoy our parks.

We urge Arlington County to think about the spillover effects of long-term construction projects like this one will have on surrounding communities, and how de-prioritizing promised park updates like at Douglas Park and Monroe Park will impact our neighbors in the Arlington Heights neighborhood.

Sincerely,

Steve Jordan Tomaszewski  
President, Douglas Park Civic Association  
[president@douglasparkca.org](mailto:president@douglasparkca.org)  
<http://www.douglasparkca.org>