

Arlington Career Center Analysis

The building designed to house the existing Arlington Career Center/Arlington Tech program is itself an improved building, and while meeting many urban standards expected, the use permit application for the entire ~10 acre Career Center site falls short in many ways including: Environmental Commitments including biophilic design/stormwater mitigation; Urban streetscape county standards, including sidewalk, bike facilities, and above grade parking; Park and recreational access standards established in the PSMP. This document will outline the problems with the Use Permit and provide recommended considerations to alleviate the concerns.

Recommended Actions

Defer Approval Until-

1. Street scape - County Street scape standards are met on the entire site, including adequate sidewalk and bike amenities.
 - a. 5' Clear is Yorktown/Wakefield why not Career Center?
2. Open Space - A phased plan is shown demonstrating a return of all access standard amenities included in the PSMP, and preferably more amenities.
 - a. Columbia Pike does not have Quincy or Virginia Highlands.
3. Environment - A review of environmental commitments of the new building and how it will advance the counties community energy plans and stormwater management goals including its relative comparison to other approved buildings and the alignment with the equity statement and vision documents of the county.
 - a. Only comparable program is HB which was LEED Gold.

The following will demonstrate the failings of Arlington Public Schools (APS) to adhere to normative County standards and the basis for which Arlington County Board should ensure an equitable approach is given to the development of schools and land across the county.

The community of Arlington has many misconceived notions about APS. First APS is not "special" it must meet the same county standards as any applicant, the school board is not authorized in Virginia Code independent authority over its land. This is best understood by the fact APS cannot "sell" land although it can "buy" land without County Board approval. Arlington County Board through the actions of approving use permits across the county demonstrates its agreement that the physical built environment and school plants comply with the Arlington Comprehensive Plan, its elements, and its vision.

Further the continuing approach by both APS and Arlington County are beginning to paint a rather poor picture for how and where public facility dollars are invested. The outcome of that within our community is to perpetuate entrenched injustices. The students who attend the Career Center deserve a building commensurate with any other APS facility, the community around the Career Center deserve the treatment equivalent of other similarly situated facilities and should not be expected to bear greater externalities than are asked of every citizen. The county should strive to treat its citizens and its development pattern with equal force of law.

Demographic Environment

Arlington County Va has most recently approved the construction of 4 new school buildings and is considering the approval of a 5th with the Career Center.

General Data

School	Zipcode	Design Cap	Year Built	Budget	Census Track
Discovery-ES	22207	620	~2015	\$46.5M	100200
Fleet-ES	22204	752	~2018	\$46.7M	102400
Heights-Multi	22209	775	~2019	\$115M	101603
Cardinal-ES	22207	725	~2022	\$55M	101000
Career-Multi	22204	1550	~2025	\$182.42M	102500

*APS Design/Construction Webpages

Community Data

School	Census Track	Median Inc	Pop	%White	%Latino	%Black
Discovery	100200	\$216,000	6,600	89%	5%	1%
Fleet	102400	\$142,000	3,400	49%	25%	16%
Heights	101603	\$125,000	3,700	59%	14%	9%
Cardinal	101000	\$161,000	3,400	86%	5%	7%
Career	102500	\$109,000	5,300	71%	19%	19%
County	County	\$128,000	236,400	67%	16%	9%

*Arlington County Census Track Dashboard

School Data

School	Free Lunch	Actual Cap	%White	%Latino	%Black	Environmental Design
Discovery	2.8%	630	71%	10%	1%	Net Zero
Fleet	32.11%	752	42%	28%	17%	Net Zero
Heights	12.5%	775	58%	19%	5%	LEED Gold
Cardinal	6.37%	732	73%	7%	5%	Net Zero
Career	34.6%	1550*	40%	36%	11%	LEED Silver
APS	30.3%	29,579	44%	29%	11%	

*Best estimate until completed

School	Free Lunch	Median Inc	Actual Cap	%White	Budget	\$/Seat
Discovery	2.8%	\$216,000	630	71%	\$46.5M	\$73,810
Fleet	32.11%	\$142,000	752	42%	\$46.7M	\$62,101
Heights	12.5%	\$125,000	775	58%	\$115M	\$148.347
Cardinal	6.37%	\$161,000	732	73%	\$55M	\$75,137
Career	34.6%	\$109,000	1550*	40%	\$182.42M	\$117,690
APS	30.3%	\$128,000	29,579	44%		

Demographic Summary.

APS has developed 5 schools in the past decade and demonstrated a consistent bias for investing more in communities with less diversity and richer than Arlington as a whole. The data presented here is not even adjusted to increase the budget to constant year dollars. If it were to be adjusted to account for a constant then year dollar, for example the Career Center 2025 dollar, the numbers would be worse and make the disparate treatment of the community by APS more evident.

The County has a responsibility to ensure that APS investments are consistent with its vision and comprehensive plan which clearly state-

Vision-

“Arlington will be a diverse and inclusive world-class urban community with secure, attractive residential and commercial neighborhoods where people unite to form a caring, learning, participating, sustainable community in which each person is important.”

Comprehensive Plan-

“The Comprehensive Plan guides coordinated development and sets high standards of public services and facilities in the County. It is a decision-making tool for the County Board, the Planning Commission and County Departments. The plan was established in 1960 and originally included five elements. Today, it includes these eleven elements:”

The evidence of facts listed above are not encouraging, an honest review of the facts would validate the development pattern of APS as inconsistent with the County’s Vision statement. Of the three elementary schools completed the one with the poorest students and most non-white students saw the least per-student spending without adjusting it for inflation, which would have only made the disparity worse.

Similarly approval of the current Career Center proposal in the use permit would continue this pattern of systematic mal investment in our community, the building is less energy efficient compared to the heights, diminishes the defined amenities available to the community instead of enhancing, which again is poorer than regular Arlington and with a black population twice the average of Arlington.

Street Scape

In general sites developed under a use permit require adherence to the Counties Street scape standards. The streets bounding the site include:

7th St S -Local minor – Needs Improvement

Highland St S.- Local Minor- Needs Improvement

9th St S – Local minor(Identified Bike Blvd)- Needs Improvement

S Walter Reed Drive – Minor Arterial – Compliant in intent

Bike Facilities-

9th St S, is the County's identified safe "low stress" bike route for all residents on the North side of Columbia Pike, transiting East-West direction. The inclusion of nearly 700 parking spots with only 2 access points being directly across from each other on 9th with nearly all occupants arriving within a 1 hour window will limit the ability for the vision of the Columbia Pike Bike Blvd to be achieved. The street scape improvements delivered concurrent with the improvements in the use permit must be included in a final approved bike solution ensuring the "low stress" route can be achieved.

Sidewalks

Standards

7th/Highland/9th St all require at least 4-5 ft min sidewalk widths with 2-4ft planted strip.

S Walter Reed 6 require 6-8 ft. sidewalk width with 5 to 6 ft. planted strip. Street is the Historic Resource Inventory Fillmore Garden Apartments.

Given the CIP designates 2570 Students as the end result of the Career Center Use permit and the associated staff we can generally anticipate over 3500 daily users on the sidewalks adjacent to the site. The parking, besides the limited street parking available, will eventually be provided by an above grade parking garage located in the corner of the site relying exclusively on the exterior sidewalks and very limited interior sidewalks to serve all 3 buildings within the Use Permit.

Specifically when reducing sidewalk width standards guidance is provided in adopted county plans. "allow, by permit and other regulatory measures, minor reductions in standard sidewalk clearspace in order to accommodate sidewalk cafes, street vending and other uses that Arlington Master Transportation Plan Streets Element – Amended October 15, 2016 17 add to the vibrancy of public streets, provided that sufficient walking space remains for routine pedestrian flows including that of persons using wheelchairs, strollers and other walking devices."¹

The current sidewalk in the proposed use permit have a narrowed free width pinch point of 33inches. County staff is claiming it will separate form APS widen this to 4' which is still insufficient. This is because the county is not requiring APS to underground the utilities located on the site area. The fact that Arlington County is not requiring the undergrounding of utilities like it did at every other high school site or any of the 5 previously approved sites is itself regrettable and while a significant investment, also a specific statement about priorities of the county, or lack thereof. The decision to keep the utilities above grade and the resulting infringement into the sidewalk leads to situations where the clear width is only 33 inches, unacceptable in any other project. The staff position not demanding at least 5' clear sidewalks on all sides is questionable, especially since a site with fewer students designed and less surrounding density, not within a Major Planning Area were required to have 5' sidewalks, including Yorktown/Wakefield.

Solutions for Street Scape-

Ensure Use Permit has a min 5' clear width sidewalk on all 4 sides of the site.

Ensure adequate protected bike facilities are planned for 9th St S.

¹ Page 16 of the Street Element of Arlington Transportation Plan

Open Space-

At the beginning of this multiyear process, and as recorded in the PSMP, the career center site delivers many amenities to the community and to the Columbia Pike Planning Area. These are enumerated in the PSMP and are as follows: 2 Playground (2-5/5-12), 1 Basketball Court, 1 Rectangle Field, and 1 Diamond field. The Diamond field on this site dates back to the earliest aerial photos as does the rectangle field. These assets are irreplaceable, and the PSMP notes nearly as much by placing them with Level of Service (LOS) requirements. This ignores the deliberate removal of a LOS standards for Community Pools at the adoption of the PSMP, because the inconvenient fact that 22204 remains the most populous zipcode without a public pool. With approval of the use permit, we remain missing the diamond field and a basketball court, a review of the LOS standards from the PSMP and the associated Diamond Field and Basketball maps below demonstrate how failure to return these assets will only further disenfranchise the Pike community, an area already identified as lacking of public open space. It also does not go the step further of adding more public facilities to a site to meet the many needed investments which are enumerated, unlike the pool which was specifically avoided, in the PSMP. Those identified amenities include Volleyball Court, Dog Park, Multiuse Trail, Community Gardens. Below will illustrate from the PSMP.

Level of Service Access standards

Figure 29. Amenity access standards

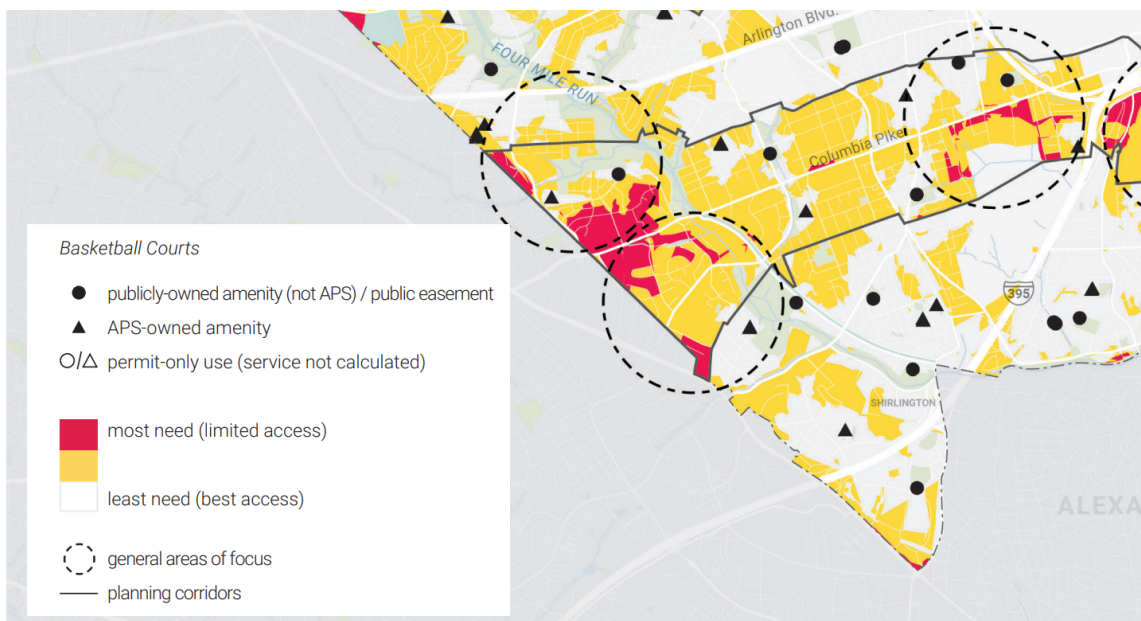
Amenities	High Density Areas	Low Density Areas
Basketball Courts	5 min	10 min
Community Gardens	5 min	10 min
Multi-Use Trails	5 min	10 min
Off-Leash Dog Parks	5 min	10 min
Playgrounds	5 min	10 min
Casual Use Spaces	5 min	10 min
Diamond Fields	10 min	20 min
Tennis Courts	10 min	20 min
Picnic Areas	10 min	20 min
Rectangular Fields	10 min	20 min
Volleyball Courts	10 min	20 min

The 5, 10 and 20 minute times reference the distance traveled using the County's walking, biking, street and transit networks.

Diamond Fields-

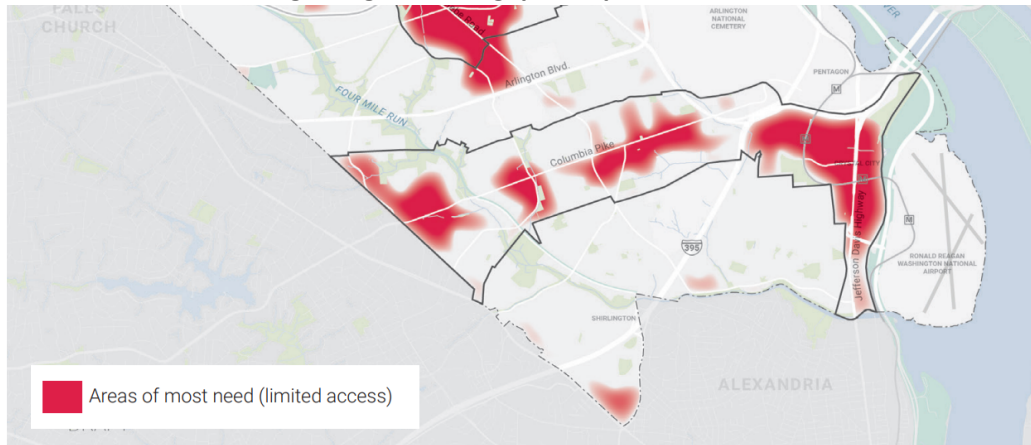


Basketball Court-



Solutions for Open Space-

Ensure Use Permit includes all existing enumerated amenities (2 Playgrounds[2-5/5-12], 1 Basketball Court, 1 Rectangle Field, 1 Diamond Field). In general on sites that can accommodate additional amenities (Such as this site) it should bring more amenities to the community (Consider: Volleyball Court/Dog Park/Multiuse Trail/Community Garden). The only thing keeping central Columbia Pike from having a larger access gap hot spot is the Career Center Site.



Environment-

Arlington County commitment to environmental design has only increased over the past 10 years. When Discovery Elementary was built it was one of the first in the nation Net-Zero schools, since then APS has continued meeting those high standards set at Discovery, with each of the three elementary Schools built with a Net-Zero design. The only other comparable building to the Career Center is the Heights building that while not being able to be designed to a net zero, similar to the Career Center's limitations of urban development, it was designed to a LEED Gold standard. Why has the Career Center whose students are more diverse, less well off and the associated community is likewise less affluent and more diverse not been designed to meet LEED Gold. Building to a LEED Gold standard has many benefits most are unseen (Higher quality materials and insulating methods/systems), all of these "unseen" items means a higher quality building and lower costs to the community in the future not only in utility bills but also longevity of the building due to higher quality materials used at the onset.

Arlington Public Schools has yet to show a before and after on the Use permit demonstrating the either increase or decrease in impervious surfaces. The actual use permit, given the remaining 3 buildings on the site and the fact that the majority of the new career centers building will be on previous pervious surfaces calls the absence of this information into question. APS should be able to answer the question is the impervious surface in the use permit increasing or decreasing. The site's ability to facilitate extra storm water capacity is extremely limited due, mainly to its geographic location as the apex of three separate stormwater drainage fields limiting its ability to provide any extra capacity to the stormwater system.

Biophilic design and land disturbing activities. APS is installing new playground equipment that is "temporary" able to be moved to a new site. In this process however of installing the temporary

playground equipment and while asking not to improve the sidewalks(Which is unacceptable) it has failed to even consider incorporating a nature design of the playground to ensure the about 20 trees could remain. The absence of such thoughtful considerations that are easily attainable given, the plan to leave 3 buildings within the use permit, begs to ask where any biophilic design principles considered.

Solutions for Environment-

APS should build Arlington Career Center to a LEED Gold Standard commensurate with the Heights Building.

APS should avoid cutting trees unless and until an approved Phased use permit ensure that the tree will ultimately have to be removed.

APS should ensure the final USE-permit, increases the amount of permeable areas within the use permit to minimize storm water mitigations necessary elsewhere.

Conclusion-

Arlington County should defer consideration of the APS Use Permit, until the above solutions are addressed. The Career Center site deserves to be the "Jewel of the Pike"; however, any claim of that today is disingenuous at best. The continual approval of APS requests without the consideration of the collective impacts runs counter to the counties Vision and Comprehensive Plan. APS has failed for over a decade to address facility planning in a comprehensive way and besides the inclusion of the existing facilities on the GLUP, we have no planning guidance to rely on with APS facilities. They were warned nearly 10 years ago when the Washington Post quoted me stating "If there's going to be 40,000 new residents on Columbia Pike, if there's going to be 20-story residential tower in Pentagon City, we need a shared vision for what the plan is,...We can't go on lurching from crisis to crisis". Therefore it is imperative that County Staff provide expert review and hold APS to the high standards any development would achieve and go the step further of ensuring the systematic and cumulative effect of APS development meets the County's Vision.

Signed-

Stephen Hughes

Planning Commissioner May '15-May '23

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Mostly just a Neighbor