

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 22, 2015

TO: CHAIRWOMAN MARY LYMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE
PLANNING COMMISSION

FROM: KARL MORITZ, DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND
ZONING

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON THE DRAFT LONG RANGE EDUCATIONAL
FACILITIES PLAN

ISSUE: The Planning Commission is asked to provide input on the Draft Long Range Educational Facilities Plan.

BACKGROUND: The City of Alexandria and the Alexandria City Public School System (ACPS) have jointly developed a Draft Long Range Educational Facilities Plan to improve facilities planning, accommodate the growing student population, and enhance educational programs and services.

A Work Group consisting of members from the School Board, the Mayor and a Member of City Council, the Campagna Center, the PTA Council, citizens at-large, City staff and ACPS staff explored the major issues that will impact public school facilities over the long term and guided the planning process. Three subcommittees of the Work Group focused on Enrollment Forecasts and Demographics, Facility Capacity Needs Analysis, and Educational Specifications (the School of the Future). The Work Group and the subcommittees were supported by ACPS and City staff.

Development of the draft plan involved significant civic engagement. All work group and subcommittee meetings were public and three community meetings related to the educational specifications were held. Staff met with various PTAs, civic associations and other stakeholders, and also held online civic engagement.

DISCUSSION:

The Plan's Executive Summary highlights, and Chapter 2 details, the rapid increases in enrollment the City has experienced since 2006, a 35% growth in K-12 enrollment from a low of 10,246 in 2006 to the 2014 fall enrollment of 13,847. Growth will continue, with long term enrollment forecast scenarios showing enrollment peaking in approximately 2030 (Figure 1.1).

Chapter 1 of the Plan includes planning and implementation policies.

Chapter 3 of the Plan includes the School Board's recently adopted Elementary and Middle School Educational Specifications (Ed Specs). These were developed under the guidance of the LREFP Work Group. Chapter 3 also contains guidelines for open space and describes, and recommends using, an urban school model.

Chapter 4 of the Plan contains Mini-Master Plans for each of the ACPS schools. These plans measured existing ACPS facilities against the recently adopted Ed Specs. Following the evaluations, the Mini-Master Plans contain recommendations, divided into required planning, first and second priorities, and long range recommendations. These are intended to be a menu of options for the School Board's consideration during the development of the Capital Improvements Program (CIP). The conceptual designs shown with the plans are only one visual representation of how to potentially accommodate the future growth. The drawings are intended to be illustrative only.

A new chapter 5 on Fiscal Challenges is being jointly written by City of Alexandria staff and ACPS staff. It will include financing/procurement options, including consideration of public/private partnership opportunities.

The key recommendations in the Draft Plan are contained in the Executive Summary:

1. Set maximum school size
 - a. Elementary schools - 850 students for new schools with School Board flexibility for expanding an existing facility beyond 850 students
 - b. Middle Schools - 1200 students for new schools with School Board flexibility for expanding an existing facility beyond 1200 students
2. Locate a new elementary school on the west side of the City as four of the elementary schools on the west side are expected to exceed 850 by 2020. A second new elementary school should be considered if growth continues to increase and in the absence of pursuing other options to address capacity.
3. Locate a new middle school in the City as Francis C. Hammond is expected to exceed 1,500 students in 2020 and George Washington will be over 1,400 students in 2020.
4. Consider options for new school sites:
 - a. On the east side of city:
 - Retain two existing elementary sites for future determination – one near Simpson Stadium Park and one in North Potomac Yard. This plan does not call for a school on either site in the near-term. This Plan supports the continued use of the Simpson Stadium Park site as open space utilized for active recreation purposes.

- b. On the west side of city:
 - Reserve a site in the Eisenhower West Small Area Plan
 - Consider the Lower Hammond site
 - c. Consider retrofitting an existing commercial building and continue to consider a K-8 model as a facility solution when the programmatic instruction is appropriate
 - d. New schools should consider an urban school model
5. Renovate and/or replace Douglas MacArthur Elementary School to alleviate failing infrastructure and capacity issues, allowing the new building to house up to 850 students as the zoning, site and educational program allows. Additional information can be found in Chapter 4.
 6. Renovate interior East side schools to meet the Educational Specifications (Ed Specs) and allow Cora Kelly and Jefferson-Houston Schools to absorb overages from Matthew Maury and Mount Vernon schools. Short and mid-term recommendations are shown, by site, in Chapter 5.
 7. Continue to renovate all schools to meet the Ed Specs through the Capital Improvement Plan. Short and mid-term recommendations are shown, by site, in Chapter 5.
 8. Recalculation of enrollment projections and capacity utilization annually. Schools that are projected to be at or above 120% utilization within three years should be considered for portable classrooms, a capacity project and/or a boundary study or other policy considerations.
 9. Consider schools in future small area planning efforts as outlined in Chapter 2.
 10. Consider schools in the development review process as outlined in Chapter 2.
 11. Implement a joint City/Schools Transportation Demand Management Program to encourage use of alternative modes of transportation as outlined in Chapter 2.

FISCAL IMPACT:

See draft plan attached.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Long Range Educational Facilities Plan (Endorsed by the LREFP Work Group, April 13, 2015)

STAFF:

Susan Eddy, Deputy Director, Planning and Zoning
Pat Mann, Planner III, Planning and Zoning
Katherine Carraway, Planner I, Planning and Zoning

Dana Wedeles, Park Planner, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
Christopher Bever, Assistant Director, Office of Management and Budget
Laurel Hammig, Facilities Planner & GIS Specialist, Alexandria City Public Schools