



PROPOSED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT

ITEM: 2016-CW-1CP
July 14, 2016

GENERAL LOCATION: Countywide

SUPERVISOR DISTRICT: All

PLANNING AREA: All

PLANNING DISTRICT: All

SUB-DISTRICT DESIGNATION: All

PARCEL LOCATION: All

Public Schools Policy Plan Amendment
For additional information about this amendment call (703) 324-1380.

PLANNING COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING:

Thursday, July 21, 2016 @ 8:15 PM

Intent to defer to Thursday, July 28, 2016 @8:15 PM

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS PUBLIC HEARING:

Tuesday, September 20, 2016 @ 4:00 PM

**PLANNING STAFF DOES RECOMMEND
THIS ITEM FOR PLAN AMENDMENT**



Reasonable accommodation is available upon 48 hours notice. For additional information about accommodation call the Planning Commission office at (703) 324-2865, or the Board of Supervisors office at (703) 324-3151.

MAP NOT APPLICABLE

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STAFF REPORT FOR PLAN AMENDMENT 2016-CW-1CP

BACKGROUND

On March 1, 2016 the Board of Supervisors authorized a Policy Plan amendment requesting that staff, working with the Planning Commission Schools Committee, Fairfax County Public Schools and the Fairfax County School Board, consider the development of revised locational and character criteria for public school facilities in the Public Facilities section of the Policy Plan element of the County's Comprehensive Plan.

This Plan Amendment was authorized by the Board in response to Fairfax County's growth strategy, which encourages development in activity centers and may result in the need for additional public schools or education facilities in these areas. The probable lack of available sites in the County's activity centers that can be developed at a low intensity for public schools requires the consideration of smaller sites developed at a higher intensity. Additionally, the lack of available sites for new schools and education facilities may require the co-location of different levels of education and other community uses on the same site. Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) may also have opportunities to retrofit buildings planned for other uses for schools and education facilities. Examples are commercial sites used as Transitional High Schools and educational programs such as Family and Early Childhood Education Program/Head Start and distance learning. The existing Policy Plan language does not provide the needed flexibility for urbanizing areas, necessitating an update of the Policy Plan.

The proposed changes to the Policy Plan text are the result of the Planning Commission Schools Committee review of the current review of the existing Plan text with input from FCPS staff, the Fairfax County School Board and staff. The changes to the Policy Plan focus on the following issues:

- Fairfax County's targeting of growth and development in activity centers such as Baileys Crossroads, Richmond Highway, Reston, Seven Corners and Tysons will result in a need for more vertical schools. Generally, activity centers do not have available sites large enough to accommodate schools and education facilities built in the low density form typically found in Fairfax County. Additionally, acquiring sites in activity centers large enough for low density school facilities is costly. Future schools and education facilities in activity centers will need to be compatible with the higher densities, mix of uses, and pedestrian and transit accessibility found in such areas.
- The lack of available sites for new facilities and the high costs of land acquisition may require different levels of education to co-locate on the same site. Co-location may be necessary for vertical schools and education facilities in activity centers as well as for schools and education facilities developed at a lower density outside of activity centers. The co-location of different levels of education would allow for shared facilities, such as a gymnasium, library or cafeteria. Outside of activity centers, this may result in the location of different levels of education on one site but in separate buildings, and the

sharing of facilities such as athletic fields. Additionally, school and education facility siting may include consideration of co-locating with other public uses, such as public libraries and recreation centers.

- The adaptive re-use of existing buildings is another possible option for future schools and education facilities. Advantages of this approach include lower construction costs, greater sustainability and a shorter construction timeline. For example, in 2013, FCPS purchased an office building in Seven Corners and retrofitted it into a school by September, 2014. The building now houses Bailey's Upper Elementary School for the Arts & Sciences for grades 3-5.
- There will be greater need for alternative education facilities and transitional schools in the future. In response to changing demographics and instructional needs, buildings designed for commercial uses may be particularly suitable for these types of facilities, as well as have the potential for community use.

ANALYSIS AND SUMMARY OF PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

The following is a summary of the proposed amendments to the Public Schools section of the Policy Plan:

- **Introduction**

The introduction includes editorial updates to all references of the levels of education offered by FCPS and the age cohorts served. Text describing the County's 2232 public facility review process, and the FCPS capital facility planning process and forecasting methodology is edited and enhanced.

- **Objective 6**

Objective 6 provides guidance for the framework and criteria for site selection and property acquisition for schools and education facilities. Recommended changes for Objective 6 include new plan language supporting locational criteria compatible with planned development in the County's activity centers, such as proximity to transit where available, public parks and libraries. Additionally, it is recommended that plan text referencing acreage be replaced with an approach based on Floor Area Ratio (F.A.R.) when determining location and expansion criteria, to avoid conflict with the selection of smaller sites in activity centers. Plan text recommending that schools and education centers avoid locating in proximity to commercial areas is removed, as new development in activity centers may likely include mixed use areas with commercial development.

- **Objective 7**

Objective 7 addresses the location criteria for administrative and maintenance facilities. Proposed changes to the plan text include adding efficiency as a locational criteria.

- **Objective 8**

Objective 8 focuses on the State of Virginia’s guidelines for the minimum size requirements of sites selected for schools and education facilities and recommends updating the text to provide clarification of Fairfax County’s adherence to these guidelines. Proposed Plan text acknowledges that sites selected for schools in activity centers, alternative education facilities and transitional schools may not meet the minimum state suggested guidelines; however, all sites must conform to F.A.R. requirements of the Fairfax County Zoning Ordinance.

- **Objective 9**

Objective 9 addresses site utilization and compatibility with the surrounding community. Recommendations for Objective 9 include updates to locational criteria consistent with other changes proposed in this plan amendment. New plan text is proposed supporting vertical schools and education facilities in activity centers, as well as co-location of schools with other community uses. Additional policies are introduced supporting vertical school design where compatible with existing or planned development. Additionally, schools and education facilities should adhere to urban design guidelines of Area Plans. Other policies proposed for Objective 9 include plan language supporting the co-location of different levels of education in one vertical structure as well as co-location of schools with community uses.

- **Objective 10**

This Policy Plan Amendment proposes a new objective supporting the use of non-traditional school properties, such as office buildings, for schools and education facilities. Additionally, a policy supporting the use of commercial sites for programs such as Transitional High Schools, Family and Early Childhood Education Program (FECEP)/Head Start and distance learning is proposed. It also includes new policy supporting recreational uses at non-traditional school properties, such as converted garage rooftops and underutilized surface parking lots, and coordination with the Fairfax County Park Authority for such uses.

- **Objective 11 (Formerly Objective 10)**

Objective 11, formerly Objective 10, provides guidance for the use of schools and education facilities, including expansions and renovations, a framework for the Capital Improvements Program, and the use of schools facilities for community programs. Proposed updates to Objective 11, include editorial updates, and new objectives supporting before-and-after child care needs and the co-location of different levels of education on one site. A new objective is proposed supporting the provision of space for before-and-after childcare needs. Additionally, an objective is proposed supporting the co-location of multiple levels of education on existing school sites when separate sites are unavailable. This allows flexibility for new education facilities due to a lack of available sites and the high costs of land acquisition.

CONCLUSION

This proposed Plan Amendment updates the locational and character criteria for Public Schools in the Public Facilities Section of the Policy Plan element of the Comprehensive plan. The update adds plan text supporting vertical schools and education facilities within the County's Activity Centers, co-location of different levels of education within the same building or site, adaptive reuse of buildings for schools and educational use, and the use of commercial sites for alternative education and transitional schools.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Comprehensive Plan be modified as shown below. Text proposed to be added is shown as underlined and text proposed to be deleted is shown with a ~~striketrough~~. Replacement text is noted as such.

MODIFY: Fairfax County Policy Plan, 2013 Edition, Public Facilities Element, as amended through 3-4-2014, pages 5 – 9:

“PUBLIC SCHOOLS

INTRODUCTION

Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) is the major provider of education in the county. FCPS ~~This system~~, which has been nationally recognized for excellence and is one of the largest school systems in the nation, has a wide range of educational facilities that accommodate instructional programs for county students from kindergarten through grade 12. In addition to accommodating educational programs, school facilities are used to meet the county's recreational and cultural needs ~~of the county~~ through programming by the Department of ~~Recreation~~ Neighborhood and Community Services. Generally, separate facilities are provided to serve up to three levels of education:

- Elementary _____ kindergarten to grade 5/6
- ~~Middle-Intermediate~~ _____ grades 6/7 and 8
- Secondary _____ grades 7 through 12
- High _____ grades 9 through 12

Additionally, FCPS has an extensive adult education program, and many specialized educational programs. Special education programs serve mentally and physically handicapped students, ranging in age from 18 months ~~2~~ to 22 years. The Family and Early Childhood Education Program (FECEP), formerly known as Head Start, is a preschool program operated primarily in elementary schools for children ages 4 and 5.

The Constitution of Virginia delegates the supervision of public schools to the school board of each locality. Virginia school boards are not county agencies. The Virginia Supreme Court consistently has acknowledged that the power to select school sites and to determine the manner in which school properties shall be used is essential to the school board's supervisory role.

Pursuant to Virginia Code annotated Section 15.2-2232 when a proposed public school facility is not featured in the Comprehensive Plan, the School Board must submit the proposed facility to the Planning Commission for a determination of whether the general, or approximate location, character, and extent of the proposed facility is substantially in accord with the Comprehensive Plan. The text, objectives, and policies appearing in this portion of the Policy Plan are planning guidelines and are not intended to negate the School Board's constitutionally vested authority for school site selection, school design, or the most appropriate method to house and accommodate Fairfax County public school students. On the other hand, to the extent that the text, objectives, and policies of this section reflect land use rather than programmatic concerns, they will be implemented by the Planning Commission, as required by Virginia Code, Section 15.2-2232.

The fundamental element in capital facility planning for public schools is determining future memberships, a complex procedure which continues to be refined. The school system employs a combination of ~~two statistical~~ multiple methodologies, a modified cohort-survival model, geocoding of students, and the cohort-component model, for projecting student populations. ~~The cohort-survival model is based on expected birth and migration rates and the cohort-component model modifies survival ratio projections to account for special events that effect projections, such as students generated by new housing. The latter model employs housing student generation yields using a computer-assisted geographic planning model, which aggregates estimates to attendance area level. These estimates are then incorporated into the cohort-survival generated attendance area estimates. These models are only effective with current data. Therefore, thorough knowledge of housing starts and use of appropriate dwelling unit multipliers are essential. In addition to obtaining current housing start information, FCPS staff conduct both windshield surveys, to determine construction progress, and mail-out surveys, to determine current household composition. Enrollment is frequently projected to within a 1% level of accuracy.~~

Planning for schools is particularly difficult in areas with transient populations, such as Northern Virginia. This problem is compounded in Fairfax County by ~~rapid housing~~ development, and a multitude of variables which alter enrollment levels, such as transfers to and from private schools, in and out migration rates, and changing family compositions in existing housing stock.

FCPS strives for precise facility planning, in order to mitigate costs associated with over-estimates and yet ensure adequate physical space for students and programs. The need for ~~new~~ facilities and additions is determined by comparing available capacity in an area and the projected students for that area. Capacity is an estimate of the number of student spaces available within an educational facility which takes into account the following factors: educational specifications for elementary, ~~intermediate~~ middle and high schools; ~~or elementary and secondary schools~~; program requirements; and appropriate student-teacher ratios. For example, program requirements can alter space allocations within a building if they utilize additional space, such as the addition of a room for computer training. Changes in student-teacher ratios can alter the number of classrooms required for a given number of students by modifying how they are organized into classes and scheduled into rooms.

Student membership forecasts, coupled with capacity estimates and facility standards, provide the framework for capital facility planning. Locational criteria assists in site planning, identification and selection.

The next 20 years will prove a significant challenge in maintaining and improving the county's high standards for educational facilities. In addition to keeping pace with technological advances and demographic fluctuations, FCPS must acquire schools sites or buildings in an ever-tightening real estate market. Land and building acquisition ~~and~~, construction of schools or lease of buildings will compete with other community facilities for available land and funding

resources. While providing for new facilities is expected to be a major focus for FCPS, it is becoming increasingly apparent that the rehabilitation of existing facilities will compete for limited facility funding. Therefore, every effort should be made to ensure that projects cost-effectively meet FCPS requirements.

~~The Constitution of Virginia delegates the supervision of public schools to the school board of each locality. Virginia school boards are not county agencies. The Virginia Supreme Court consistently has acknowledged that the power to select school sites and to determine the manner in which school properties shall be used is essential to the school board's supervisory role.~~

~~Pursuant to Virginia Code annotated Section 15.2-2232 when a proposed public school facility is not featured in the Comprehensive Plan, the School Board must submit the proposed facility to the Planning Commission for a determination of whether the general, or approximate location, character, and extent of the proposed facility is substantially in accord with the Comprehensive Plan. The text, objectives, and policies appearing in this portion of the Policy Plan are planning guidelines and are not intended to negate the School Board's constitutionally vested authority for school site selection, school design, or the most appropriate method to house and accommodate Fairfax County public school students. On the other hand, to the extent that the text, objectives, and policies of this section reflect land use rather than programmatic concerns, they will be implemented by the Planning Commission, as required by Virginia Code, Section 15.2-2232.~~

Location

Objective 6: ~~Acquire sites for future building schools or educational facilities through negotiation, dedication, or condemnation, which best provide efficiently located schools. This may include the siting of schools or facilities in high density areas or on parcels of limited size, referred to as “urban” or “vertical” schools or facilities.~~

- Policy a. Place schools on parcels meeting the optimum number of general locational criteria. Sites should be evaluated by the following factors:
- Safe and convenient accessibility to pedestrian and road networks, and transit where available.
 - Floor Area Ratio (F.A.R.) Acreage to accommodate expansion, when the school is originally sized below the maximum efficiency standard for that type of school.
 - Compatibility with adjoining planned and existing development and with the Comprehensive Plan.
 - Aesthetically pleasing physical qualities with appropriate engineering features (e.g. soils, topography).
 - Proximity to other public facilities, such as Ppolice and Ffire and Rrescue services, public parks and libraries.
 - ~~Proximity of schools to commercial areas should be avoided, if possible.~~
- Policy b. Locate school sites, when situated in areas conducive to pedestrian traffic, to take advantage of maximum walking distances of one mile for elementary schools and one and a half miles for middle schools, intermediate and high schools, and secondary schools.

- Policy c. Locate ~~middle schools, intermediate and high schools, and secondary schools,~~ and when possible, elementary schools, where they can be served by public water and sewer. When elementary schools must be located in non-sewered areas in order to serve their target student population, well and septic can be utilized if no other alternative is available.
- Policy d. ~~Purchase~~ Acquire school sites, when land dedications cannot be obtained, as far in advance of construction as possible, to ensure availability of both the preferred location and the necessary site features. ~~Implement a land~~ Plan for acquisitions ~~plan~~ through the Capital Improvement Program.
- Policy e. Encourage site dedications which provide sufficient F.A.R. ~~usable acreage~~ to meet locational criteria.
- Policy f. Coordinate the acquisition and design of the site's active recreation areas with the Fairfax County Park Authority and other agencies, ~~as required to meet recreational standards and where feasible.~~ This will ensure maximum opportunities for co-location and efficient use of recreational and other facilities.
- Policy g. ~~Encourage a~~ As part of the development and redevelopment process, ~~commitments encourage commitments for school renewals and additions renovations and additional capacity where permissible.~~

Objective 7: Distribute administration and maintenance facilities to conveniently serve the areas they support where feasible.

- Policy a. Locate Area Administration buildings in the school areas they are intended to serve.
- Policy b. Locate maintenance and operation facilities to afford greater convenience, efficiency and reduction of travel time.

Character and Extent

Objective 8: Locate schools on sites which meet or exceed minimum state size standards guidelines where feasible.

- Policy a. Ensure that minimum site size conforms to the Fairfax County Zoning Ordinance F.A.R. requirements. This may ~~require~~ result in the acquisition of sites acreage that do not conform in addition to the state suggested minimum requirements guidelines.

Objective 9: Design schools and educational facilities to allow for maximum optimal site utilization while providing optimum service to, and compatibility with, the local community.

- Policy a. Design schools to maximize a site's utility, while providing for safety and aesthetics. Provide for possible future expansion and allow for efficient flow of traffic. Provide adequate stacking space and circulation for school buses, student drop off, and offstreet parking, as required. The impact of school traffic on local road networks should, to the extent possible, be minimized.

- Policy b. Design and construct schools with appreciation for, and attention to, environmentally sensitive lands.
- Policy c. Locate ~~elementary, intermediate and high~~ schools in relation to residential or mixed-use areas, the road network, ~~and~~ traffic patterns and transit where available to optimize the resulting safety and convenience for students, residents, and commuters. When possible, elementary schools should be located in, or on the periphery of, residential or mixed-use areas to ensure proximity and convenience for students and the local community.
- Policy d. Provide for compatibility between schools and adjacent properties with appropriate screening and fencing, in accordance with the Fairfax County Zoning Ordinance. When designing and constructing schools, preserve as much mature natural vegetation as possible.
- Policy e. Design urban or vertical buildings for educational purposes where intensity and character are compatible with the adjoining planned and existing development.
- Policy f. Consider urban design guidelines of Area Plans, as appropriate, for schools and buildings for educational purposes.
- Policy g. Consider co-location of different levels of education and other types of programs in one structure, with shared facilities such as cafeteria, gymnasium, auditorium, library and administrative offices.
- Policy h. Consider co-location of schools with other public uses such as a library or a recreational center.

Objective 10: Consider adaptive reuse of buildings for public schools and educational purposes.

- Policy a. Consider non-traditional school properties such as office or commercial buildings for conversion to education facilities.
- Policy b. Consider commercial sites to offer programs such as Transitional High Schools, Family and Early Childhood Education Program (FECEP)/Head Start and distance learning. These sites could also provide services to the community.
- Policy c. Provide outdoor recreation areas on converted rooftops and underutilized surface parking lots. Coordinate with the Fairfax County Park Authority or other organizations for efficient use of recreational facilities for both school and community use.

Other

Objective 110: Encourage full utilization optimization of existing schools and other facilities, whenever possible and reasonable, to support educational and community objectives.

- Policy a. Build additions, when appropriate, to minimize the need for new facilities.

- Analyze carefully the costs and benefits associated with construction of an addition as compared to a new facility.
- Policy b. Consider the expansion of existing school facilities identified on the Comprehensive Plan map, as a feature shown of the Comprehensive Plan provided the proposed expansion has received prior approval by a public bond referendum, is included in the county's currently adopted Capital Improvement Program, and does not significantly impact ~~on~~ the character of the existing facility and its compatibility with the surrounding area.
- Policy c. Provide temporary facilities as required to respond to short term student population accommodation needs.
- Policy d. Promote equity parity between older and newer schools and facilities through ~~the Renewal Program~~ renovation. Apply the same educational specifications used as a guide in the construction of new schools facilities for planning the ~~renewal renovation of old ones~~ existing facilities. Consider expected future utilization rates when proposing ~~renewal~~ renovation projects.
- Policy e. Continue the practice of serving local communities, for scoutsing, senior citizen programs, and other neighborhood based activities, through the use of school facilities. Provide access to school grounds for community use of recreational facilities. ~~Cooperate in the use of schools space for the School Age Children Child Care (SACC) program.~~
- Policy f. Continue to work in collaboration with the Fairfax County Office for Children and other organizations for the provision of before and after-school child care services in, or in proximity to, schools and school facilities.
- Policy ~~f~~ g. Continue the practice of allowing the Park Authority and other organizations to utilize sites before school construction begins.
- Policy ~~g~~ h. Provide space for other public service needs, when possible and reasonable, in underutilized schools.
- Policy i. Consider co-location of multiple facilities for different levels of education on existing school sites when separate sites are unavailable."

COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN MAP:

The Comprehensive Plan Map will not change.

TRANSPORTATION PLAN MAP:

The Countywide Transportation Plan Map will not change.