



April 21, 2021

Subject: ARCA -AHCA- CCCA Priorities, APS Capital Improvement Plan 2022

Dear Superintendent Duran and School Board Member,

As you are preparing the APS CIP, we the representatives of the three 22202 civic associations, wish to convey our thoughts on the school needs for our area. What you see below demonstrates that the norm for students in our community is to attend overcrowded schools. As of right now, a student who started kindergarten at Oakridge Elementary School in 2015 will spend all but 2 years of their academic career in Arlington in schools that are operating at 115% capacity or higher. Those two years at or below capacity were the result of a boundary change and a global pandemic. At this point in time, students who start in Oakridge Elementary in fall 2021 can expect to be in overcrowded schools for their entire academic career. And as far as our community can see, outside some small boundary adjustments, there are no plans to meet the space needs of our growing student population. Inadequate facilities lead to inequities in delivery of instructional content and unnecessary strain on staff, students, and the community.

1. **Funding for development of a new elementary school in 22202** – Currently, students within the 22202 area attend either Oakridge Elementary or Hoffman-Boston Elementary, with the majority of 22202 elementary age children attending Oakridge. As development continues in Pentagon City and Crystal City, the need for additional elementary school seats will grow. Due to the geography of the area, this is not a problem that can be solved through boundary changes, as there are a number of barriers that make walking to other schools impossible and busing more complicated. As such, the most appropriate solution, as was expressed by the South Arlington Working Group and also by Livability22202 in our [Framework and Action Plan of November 2019](#), is to locate a new elementary school within 22202. Based on current projections, Oakridge is expected to be at 128% capacity by the 2025-2026 school year. These projections do not account for some 6,000 residential units being proposed for new residential projects in Crystal City, some of which are already under construction.

2. **Finding a solution for the overcrowding of Gunston Middle School** – Gunston is the only neighborhood middle school serving 22202 and the surrounding areas and is currently over capacity. While Kenmore, Swanson, Hamm, and Jefferson all saw a significant contraction of students during the pandemic, Gunston remains at 115% capacity. By school year 2025-2026 Gunston is expected to be at 137% capacity. Gunston currently houses three programs – a neighborhood middle school, the middle school Montessori program, and a Spanish-immersion program. These programs compete for scarce resources at Gunston to the detriment of all

students. The CIP needs to identify funding to increase the number of neighborhood seats available at Gunston, either through relocating the option programs or by other means.

3. **Addressing the future deficit of High School seats** –. Wakefield is expecting to reach a 124% capacity by the 2025-2026 school year. APS needs to leverage all available options to identify creative solutions to address the growing need for high school seats in South Arlington. There are opportunities for shifting some programs to the Crystal City Underground to create full time seats at the Career Center site and we strongly encourage APS consider this as a solution to meet the needs of all students. As the pandemic has shown, it is possible for students to thrive in a non-traditional educational environment and placing students closer to internships and other outside the classroom learning experiences by co-locating classrooms near local businesses and transit could improve student opportunities.

The 22202 community has been sounding the alarm regarding the inadequacy of the number of school seats for our community for several years, and the situation will continue to become more dire as development around Amazon’s HQ2 continues to increase and more residential units come online. Additional factors, such as the Washington Housing Conservancy’s purchase of Crystal House and the increased focus on missing middle housing, will also increase the number of housing units likely to produce school age children. Before Amazon’s announcement in 2018 of its new headquarters, Arlington’s population was projected to grow by 26% over the next 25 years, to 301,000. Much of that growth will be concentrated in the Route 1 corridor and the adjacent Columbia Pike corridor, with expected population increases of 51%, and 63% respectively. There are few development possibilities in 22202 left where a school could be built and Livability22202 has emphasized that they be given serious consideration in the ongoing Pentagon City Phased Development Site Plan process.

Given the long timelines associated with capital projects the size and scope of building schools or otherwise creating school seats, it is imperative that we begin the process of solving these concerns in earnest. If the COVID-19 global pandemic has shown us anything, it is that adequate facilities are imperative to ensuring the health and safety of our students. It is with this in mind that our community asks you to commit to providing adequate space for our students to learn.

We recognize the difficulty of developing a sound APS CIP in the current pandemic climate and appreciate your efforts to focus on the highest priorities for communities like ours and others in Arlington.

Sincerely,



Michael Pickford  
President  
Arlington Ridge CA



Scott Miles  
President  
Aurora Highlands CA



Carol Fuller  
President  
Crystal City CA

