



June 23, 2021

Subject: ARCA -AHCA- CCCA Priorities, More APS Seats in 22202

Dear Arlington County Board Members,

As elected community representatives of the three 22202 civic associations, we would like to voice support for the board's attention on the development of a plan for the creation of more K-12 seats in 22202. We call upon the county to conduct focused engagements with APS with the near-term aim of siting an elementary school within walkable distance of a significant percentage of children in 22202. And to include a long-term plan in next year's CIP to address capacity issues at Gunston Middle School and Wakefield High School, through construction of existing facilities or new and innovative solutions leveraging partnerships with industry and commercial real estate developers.

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. The inadequacy of these educational facilities to meet the needs of our community's children will further exacerbate inequity across the County.

It is our understanding that both the County and APS shifted to a 3-year CIP in 2021 due to the pandemic, and that capacity in 22202 was not addressed due to other critical priorities. It is our expectation that the upcoming 10-year CIP will include a clear plan for the construction of a new elementary school in 22202, and more seats at the middle and high school level to address the overcrowding at Gunston and Wakefield. As development continues in Pentagon City and Crystal City, the need for additional school seats will grow. 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. 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 the school year 2025-2026 Gunston is expected to be at 137% capacity.

Our elected representatives have attended APS CIP work sessions, School Board Meetings, and the recent Virtual County Board Joint Work Session with APS. We support APS being

included in the County's planning processes, to include the ongoing Pentagon City Planning Study. We believe that communities cannot prosper, socially or economically, without high quality schools to attract residents and develop talent pipelines. We also believe our current situation presents opportunity to create innovative solutions and re-envision the APS of the future. The unique geography and diverse composition of 22202 have created fertile ground for innovative schooling that could include STEAM internships with corporate partners and advanced course-work at Virginia Tech in an environment that is fully accessible by multiple modes of public transit. Virtual schooling is not by itself innovative, especially when it is the only solution available in a global pandemic, however it does demonstrate the potential benefit when we think outside of the box.

We look forward to future engagements with both the County and School Boards and are optimistic that a new level of seriousness about education in 22202 will bring about real change for our communities.

Sincerely,



Mike Pickford, President  
Arlington Ridge CA



Scott Miles, President  
Aurora Highlands CA



Carol Fuller, President  
Crystal City CA