



AURORA HIGHLANDS CIVIC ASSOCIATION

Arlington County Board

March 14, 2026

Dear Arlington County Board,

We are in the age of AI, so I took a moment to interview ChatGPT about the historic preservation of Nellie Custis School, the Local Historic District (LHD) application and accepted urban planning principles in the age of a **Density Only** political environment. ChatGPT gleaned Arlington's own documents and policy, HALRB's documents and policy, and writings by noted urban planners. See Attachment A.

The outtake is that first, Nellie Custis School, because it is identified as a **contributing** resource to the Aurora Highlands Historic District (and no changes since then, 2008), **has already been deemed by the National Register of Historic Places to have historic integrity**—this is completely in conflict with the HPP LHD Study that claims the building does not have “historic integrity”. Further, the kinds of **modifications that were made preceding 2008 did not and do not impact historic integrity because they are minor and expected in a 100-year-old building.**

Second, there is precedent for the Nellie Custis LHD at other schools in Arlington. The site meets the requirements and the purpose of the LHD – “to protect historically and architecturally significant buildings and the character of neighborhoods”. ChatGPT summarized HALRB's expected position based on past policy that demolishing Nellie Custis School would almost certainly be rejected. **“Based on HALRB's past actions they show they prioritize retention of contributing buildings, maintaining streetscape and district character. Context-sensitive adaptive reuse for additional density or functionality and even strong market or density pressures do not typically override HALRB's preservation mandate.”** A decision to demolish, in this case would then be inconsistent with past policy.

Third, I asked ChatGPT to review the proposed 60 ft tall block long building and the demolition of the historic school against the writing of Jane Jacobs and Kevin Lynch, two of the most influential urban planners of the 20th Century, whose work inspired Arlington's award-winning Urban Villages, where density is tied to infrastructure creating diversity of places from high density urban corridors that yield to historic organic neighborhoods like Aurora Highlands. I also included the ChatGPT summary of positions of fellow Virginia Tech alum Vic Dover - as indicated in his books - who helped shape the Columbia Pike form-based code that Takis in particular is familiar with. As indicated in their writing, the urban planners have different reasons as to why Nellie Custis School should be preserved, but they would all agree it should be preserved, adaptively reused, and any new building be in scale with the historic district up to 3 stories. All would be concerned with the large block of building, and Mr. Lynch would be concerned about the scale of the buildings on narrow 23rd and Grant Streets.

I asked ChatGPT to review these positions within Density Only political environment we are in. Even in this environment, the position - *based on their writings* - of these planners would clearly be to balance density with street design planning principles. I proposed the Aurora Highlands Civic Association proposed "Alternative Envelope" – 3 stories built on the parking lot, a green barrier between the park of the building, adaptive reuse of the historic structure - and ChatGPT agreed that based on the urban planners' writings, they would agree the **Alternative Envelope is exactly the kind of development that balances density with design.**

Finally, I asked ChatGPT about the urban planners' view of the Density Only approach of the Faith in Housing legislation which will allow by-right 60 ft tall buildings to copycat the blockish Melwood building. Here is the summary:

- **Demolishing the school for maximum-density buildings represents a complete abandonment of historic preservation, human-scale urbanism, and context-sensitive design.**
- Even though density goals may be achieved, the **qualitative value of the streetscape, neighborhood identity, and district character is permanently lost.**
- This scenario violates virtually all principles advocated by Lynch, Jacobs, and Dover, leaving a high-density corridor with no historic or social anchors. [not to mention school overcrowding, congestion, and lack of other needed infrastructure]

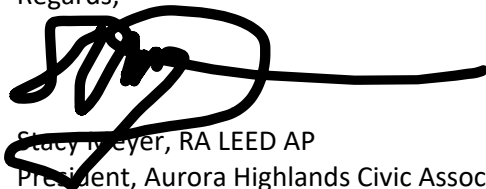
The Faith in Housing Bill has upped the stakes dramatically here in Aurora Highlands. As it stands today, the only measure preventing a potential canyon of five 60 ft tall buildings is this LHD.

Remember, the County has complete flexibility in the restrictions the LHD, not unlike its flexibility over site plan conditions [as a reminder the County included none of the requested Aurora Highlands Site Plan conditions sent January 2025]. While we request that the county require the preservation of the historic building, the overlay requirements could also include lowering the height of the building, or providing buffers – requirements that should have been included in the original site plan but were not.

Please consider us. We are your taxpayers, constituents, neighbors and voters. And, consider as well, those who will live in this ill-planned Melwood project. It is 2026. Arlington is known for its award-winning planning and placemaking. Density Only planning is a bad idea, we can do better.

I realize this is ChatGPT – for better or worse - and it may not be 100% correct, but I am certain that this analysis and these positions are in the right corner of the room. Buildings, when done well, last for generations. Let's think sensibly about longer term and the impact to our neighborhood and the precedent that is being set. There will be no going back from the demolition of Nellie Custis School. Thank you,

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stacy Meyer", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Stacy Meyer, RA LEED AP
President, Aurora Highlands Civic Association

Cc: Aurora Highlands Civic Association Board

ATTACHMENT A

Interview with Chat GPT regarding historic preservation, urban planning as it relates to the development of the Nellie Custis School Site. Background Information and Conditions:

- 23rd Street South is 40 ft wide; Grant Street is 30 ft wide. Nelly Custis Park is directly adjacent.
- The Nellie Custis School is 100 years old. It has butted on additions that are 30 – 60 years old on the non-primary street facades. It is in structurally excellent condition. The masonry walls and trim are well preserved. All of the windows and door have been replaced within the existing masonry opening, except the header has been replaced. Otherwise, there is one new window on the Grant Street façade. The windows on the back have been bricked in. The small metal entry canopy in the front is missing as are the original entry steps. The school was deemed a contributing building to the historic district in 2008 and has not been modified since then.
- The site is in the Aurora Highlands Historic District and the community overwhelmingly favors preservation and an approach to development in keeping with the historic district.
- Existing setbacks 10 feet on non-street side, 25 feet on street facing sides, 35 ft height

PART 1: HISTORIC INTEGRITY & LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT OVERVIEW

Q: Given the existing condition of the school does it have historic integrity?

The Legal Threshold for Losing Historic Integrity in Arlington: In Arlington County, Virginia, once a building is identified as a **contributing resource in a historic district**, there is a **relatively high bar before it can be said to have “lost historic integrity.”** This threshold comes from the way local preservation programs operate and from federal preservation guidance used by localities.

- **ARLINGTON PRACTICE:** Arlington uses the Secretary of the Interior Standards. In Arlington historic districts, a contributing building generally loses integrity only when **alterations fundamentally change the building’s historic form, materials, or architectural identity.** *[note: there has been no change since the building was named contributing in 2008]*
- **Integrity is judged by overall historic character, not by the survival of every historic detail.**
- Preservation review focuses on **whether these defining characteristics remain visible and understandable.** Because of this, some building changes are considered **minor** if they do not affect the defining features. For example:

Change	Typical impact on integrity
Replacement windows in same openings	Minor
Rear additions	Minor to moderate [in this case the additions can be easily removed as the existing wall remains]
Missing canopy or awning	Minor
Door replacement	Minor
Interior alterations	Usually irrelevant

Q: The landowner wants to demolish the building; would a Local Historic District be appropriate in this case?

Yes—a **local historic district would be highly appropriate** in this scenario, and here’s why:

- Local historic districts are designed to **protect historically and architecturally significant buildings** and the character of neighborhoods. (arlingtonva.us)
- They **prevent demolition or inappropriate alterations** that would compromise the district’s integrity.




Relevance to the Nellie Custis School. Factors making a local historic district appropriate:











- **Architectural significance**
 - A 100-year-old masonry school with preserved primary façade and character-defining features.
- **Contributing to the neighborhood**
 - Located in the Aurora Highlands Historic District
 - Maintains the **historic streetscape and community identity**.
- **Community support**
 - The neighborhood **overwhelmingly favors preservation**, a key consideration in local historic district designation.
- **Threat of demolition**
 - Local historic districts are explicitly intended to **protect buildings under threat**, especially when owners seek to demolish historic resources.

Q: What precedents are there in Arlington for Local Historic Districts protection of historic schools?

Here’s a **conceptual diagram for the Arlington local historic district schools**, showing how **primary façades, secondary façades, and additions** are generally treated. This visual helps illustrate **preservation priorities** that HALRB uses when reviewing changes:

 **Preservation Diagram Key**

-  Primary façade / character-defining features preserved
-  Secondary façades / minor alterations allowed
-  Later additions / interior or rear modifications allowed

School	Primary Façade	Secondary Façade	Additions / Rear / Interior
Hume School			 Interior repurposing, ADA/mechanical upgrades
Swanson Middle School			 Interior renovations, mechanical upgrades
Stratford School			 2017: 40,000-sq.ft. addition, interior renovations
McKinley Elementary School			 Interior reconfiguration, mechanical upgrades
Nellie Custis School (hypothetical)			 Windows replaced within openings, bricked rear windows, missing canopy

Q: What would HALRB’s position be on the demolition of Nellie Custis School based on past positions?

- **Demolishing Nellie Custis School would almost certainly be rejected by HALRB.**
- HALRB’s past actions show they prioritize:
 - Retention of contributing buildings
 - Maintaining streetscape and district character
 - Context-sensitive adaptive reuse for additional density or functionality
- Even strong market or density pressures **do not typically override HALRB’s preservation mandate.**

HALRB Perspective on Nellie Custis School Demolition

Criterion	HALRB Likely Position	Rationale / Past Precedent
Contributing Building Status	✗ Opposed	Nellie Custis is a contributing building in the Aurora Highlands Historic District. HALRB consistently protects contributing buildings from demolition.
Historic Integrity	✗ Opposed	The school has structurally sound masonry, preserved trim, and original massing , meeting standards for retention. Past HALRB decisions favor preservation even with modifications.
Community Preference	✗ Opposed	The community overwhelmingly supports restoration and context-sensitive development. HALRB has historically taken community opinion into account when it aligns with preservation goals.
Impact on Historic District	✗ Opposed	Demolition would negatively affect district character and integrity , a key consideration in HALRB’s review of proposals. Similar cases (e.g., Stratford, Stafford Schools) were preserved with compatible additions rather than replaced.
Adaptive Reuse Potential	✓ Encouraged	HALRB historically avored adaptive reuse over demolition. Rear additions or interior modifications are preferred methods to increase use or density without destroying the historic building.

» Ask ChatGPT

Q: Would HALRB support a Local Historic District based on past positions, and why?

HALRB would **favor establishing or maintaining a Local Historic District** in this area. LHD designation:

- Protects historic school buildings like Nellie Custis
- Controls new development to preserve streetscape and scale
- Aligns with **community and historic preservation priorities**

🔗 In practice, this is **one of HALRB’s strongest tools to resist density-only or demolition-heavy proposals.**

HALRB Perspective – Local Historic Districts

Criterion	HALRB Likely Position	Rationale
Preservation of Contributing Buildings	✔ Strongly Favor	LHD status provides formal protection for historic and contributing buildings, ensuring they are retained and maintained.
Control Over Additions & Alterations	✔ Favor	LHD designation allows HALRB to review new construction, building additions, and alterations , ensuring compatibility with historic character.
Protection Against Demolition	✔ Strongly Favor	LHD status empowers HALRB to prevent demolition of significant historic structures , safeguarding the district's integrity.
Consistency with District Goals	✔ Favor	LHDs help preserve neighborhood scale, architectural rhythm, and historic character , which aligns with HALRB's preservation mandate.
Community Support Alignment	✔ Favor	HALRB often defers to demonstrated community support for preservation , which is formalized and reinforced through LHD designation.

PART 2: URBAN PLANNING PRINCIPLES APPLIED TO THE SITE

Q: Do urban planners still value historic preservation? Or is density more important?

- **Historic preservation is still highly valued**, especially where buildings contribute to a neighborhood's character.
- **Density is also important**, particularly to meet housing and sustainability goals.
- Modern urban planning sees these as **complementary**: preservation anchors the city's identity, and thoughtful density makes it **viable, vibrant, and sustainable**
- In short: **planners don't have to choose** — they aim to **integrate density with preservation**, using tools like adaptive reuse, form-based codes, and historic districts.

Q: Let's review urban planning and how some famous (and local) urban planners would see development of this site. Tell me about Jane Jacobs, Kevin Lynch and Vic Dover.

Kevin Lynch

- **Focus:** How people perceive and navigate cities.
- **Key Ideas:**
 - *Mental maps* of the city
 - Five elements: **paths, edges, districts, nodes, landmarks**
 - Emphasis on **legibility and city imageability**
- **Historic Preservation:** Preserving landmarks and recognizable urban features supports city legibility.

Jane Jacobs

- **Focus:** Neighborhood vitality and community life.
- **Key Ideas:**
 - Mixed-use streets and short blocks
 - "Eyes on the street" for safety and engagement
 - Building diversity supports social and economic life
- **Historic Preservation:** Retaining older buildings preserves neighborhood character and supports diverse communities

Vic Dover

- **Focus:** Contemporary, sustainable, human-centered urban design.
- **Key Ideas:**
 - Walkable streets, public spaces, and mixed-use neighborhoods
 - Community engagement in design
 - Adaptive reuse and compact development
- **Historic Preservation:** Supports reusing historic structures as part of sustainable, vibrant neighborhoods.

Q: Given the site constraints, what recommendation would each of these planners give for development based solely based on their writing?

Planner	Preservation Emphasis	Development / Density Emphasis	Height & Setback Recommendation (Context-Sensitive)
Kevin Lynch	Preserve primary façade and roofline as landmark along 23rd Street	Maintain legibility, paths, and nodes	Rear additions limited to 2–3 stories max , set back 15–25 ft from historic façade; maintain visibility and orientation along 23rd Street
Jane Jacobs	Retain historic fabric to support neighborhood vitality	Support community activation and mixed-use	Rear/secondary façades 2–3 stories max ; setbacks 5–15 ft; maintain human scale along Grant Street (30 ft) for pedestrian comfort
Vic Dover	Adaptive reuse to promote sustainability and walkable urbanism	Add density within rear and interior spaces	Rear additions 2–3 stories max , step-backs to protect light and park views; focus on interior conversion or minor infill rather than taller structures

Q: Why would these planners limit additions to 2 – 3 stories?

If we limit the reasoning **strictly to what Kevin Lynch, Jane Jacobs, and Vic Dover wrote**, the **2–3 story limit** isn't an arbitrary zoning number — it comes from their principles on **human scale, visual legibility, and neighborhood vitality**. Here's the rationale:

1. Kevin Lynch – Legibility & Imageability

- Lynch emphasizes **the city as a legible “image” in people’s minds**.
- Taller additions at the rear could **overwhelm the primary building**, breaking the **landmark qualities of the historic façade**.
- Keeping rear additions modest (**2–3 stories**) preserves **clarity of nodes, paths, and edges**, ensuring the school remains recognizable as a mental and physical anchor.

2. Jane Jacobs – Human Scale & Neighborhood Vitality

- Jacobs stresses **street-level human scale and pedestrian experience**.
- Overly tall buildings create **visual and social barriers**, reducing neighborhood interaction and street vitality.
- By limiting rear height to **2–3 stories**, the development supports **active streets, walkability, and human comfort**, while allowing adaptive reuse that maintains neighborhood life.

3. Vic Dover – Sustainable, Contextual Urban Design

- Dover advocates **density integrated with existing urban context and public spaces**.
- Taller rear additions could **dominate the site, block light, and reduce access to the park**, conflicting with sustainable and walkable design goals.
- A **2–3 story limit** allows **adaptive reuse and modest density** while keeping the site compatible with the surrounding streetscape and park.

Q: What about Lynch’s theories about street width to height ratio? How does that relate to the site?

- Lynch didn't provide a fixed formula, but his urban analysis emphasizes that **building heights should be proportional to street width** to preserve **clarity, human perception, and legibility**.

- If buildings are too tall relative to street width, they **dominate the view**, obscure landmarks, and make the street feel enclosed or oppressive.

2. Application to Nellie Custis School:

Street	Width	Recommended Max Height	Ratio Rationale (Lynch)
23rd Street	40 ft	2–3 stories (~30–35 ft)	Ratio ~1:1 to 1:1.2 → maintains legibility of primary façade and visual comfort along a moderate-width street
Grant Street	30 ft	2–3 stories (~25–30 ft)	Ratio ~1:1 → preserves human scale, pedestrian comfort , and neighborhood vitality; avoids overpowering narrow street
Rear / Park	Park adjacency	2–3 stories max	Height limited by context, not street width; ensures light, air, and visual access to park; keeps additions subordinate to historic building

Q: Based on their writings, how would these planners see a proposal to demolish the school and replace it with a big block long building that is 60 ft tall?

1. Kevin Lynch – Landmark & Legibility

Perspective:

- Lynch would be concerned that demolishing the historic school **destroys a key landmark**, which is a **node of legibility** for the neighborhood.
- A **60-ft tall monolithic building** would overwhelm the street and disrupt the **mental map people have of the area**, breaking continuity and making the street less readable.

Critique:

- The building would likely **obscure paths, edges, and nodes**, creating visual clutter rather than clarity.
- Loss of historic identity diminishes the “imageability” of the district.

2. Jane Jacobs – Human Scale & Neighborhood Vitality

Perspective:

- Jacobs would argue that a **tall, continuous block** kills **pedestrian engagement**.
- Narrow streets like Grant Street (30 ft) would feel **overwhelmed**, reducing light, air, and comfort for walkers.
- Large-scale demolition eliminates diversity in **building ages, sizes, and uses**, which Jacobs emphasized as critical for **economic and social vibrancy**.

Critique:

- The street loses its **human scale**.

- Social activity, “eyes on the street,” and mixed-use opportunities are reduced.
- Neighborhood cohesion and vitality would be harmed by a building that dominates rather than integrates with the community.

3. Vic Dover – Sustainable, Context-Sensitive Design

Perspective:

- Dover would note that **demolition of the historic school is unsustainable**, as it wastes embodied energy and materials.
- A 60-ft tall monolithic block **ignores the context**: streets, park adjacency, and neighboring buildings.
- Walkability, light, and public space are compromised.

Critique:

- The proposal would be **overly dense for the context**, reducing environmental and social sustainability.
- It ignores opportunities for **adaptive reuse, step-backs, or terracing** that could increase density without harming context.

Bottom Line

- **Demolishing the historic school for a 60-ft block would violate core principles of all three planners:**
 - Landmark integrity and legibility (Lynch)
 - Human-scale street life and neighborhood diversity (Jacobs)
 - Context-sensitive, sustainable, walkable design (Dover)
- A **more acceptable approach**, consistent with their writings, would be:
 - **Preserve the primary façade** as a landmark.
 - Add **modest, stepped-back rear additions** (2–3 stories in this site’s context).
 - Maintain **pedestrian access, street-scale rhythm, and park views**.

Q: How would these planners view the neighborhood’s “Alternative Envelope” of preserving the historic building, doing an adjacent building 3 stories tall and providing a heavy landscape buffer for the park and how would that proposal impact the historic district – again based on their writings?

Historic District

1. **Contributing Building Integrity:**
 - The historic school remains **intact**, preserving its **character-defining features, façade, and landmark presence**.
 - The adjacent 3-story building is **set back and separated by green space**, so it does not visually dominate or obscure the school.
2. **Streetscape Compatibility:**
 - New construction respects the **scale, rhythm, and human proportion** of 23rd Street and Grant Street.

- Sidewalks, pedestrian paths, and green buffers maintain **neighborhood cohesion**, consistent with historic district character.
- 3. **Visual Buffer & Open Space:**
 - Trees and landscaped open space provide a **soft transition to the park**, preventing the historic district from feeling “crowded” or overbuilt.
 - Preserves **views of the historic school from streets and nearby properties**.
- 4. **Historic District Preservation Principles:**
 - The project aligns with **Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation:**
 - Preserves historic character and materials of primary building
 - New construction is **differentiated but compatible** in massing, scale, and placement
 - Ensures **reversibility** (new building could theoretically be modified without harming historic school)

 **Conclusion:**

This proposal represents a **balanced approach**—it **preserves the historic building, integrates moderate new density, maintains human-scale streetscapes, and enhances the public realm** with green space—fully aligned with urban planning theory and historic district guidelines.


Planner Perspectives

Planner	Perspective	Rationale
Kevin Lynch	Supportive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Historic school preserved as a visual landmark, maintaining legibility and mental maps of the neighborhood. - Adjacent 3-story building is subordinate in height, so the landmark remains dominant. - Green space and trees act as clear edges, reinforcing street and park visual hierarchy.
Jane Jacobs	Highly supportive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Human scale preserved along 23rd Street and Grant Street, encouraging pedestrian comfort. - Green space and trees improve the public realm and neighborhood vitality, supporting eyes on the street and social interaction. - Addition provides incremental density without destroying diversity of buildings.
Vic Dover	Very supportive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adaptive reuse of the school is sustainable, conserving embodied energy. - Moderate-height adjacent building increases density contextually. - Green space and trees enhance walkability, open space quality, and environmental performance.

PART 3: EVALUATION OF THE FAITH IN HOUSING IMPACT / DENSITY ONLY APPROACH

Q: What if I told you that the 60 ft building is approved and now there is a proposal to allow several more properties on the street to do the same? Evaluate these planners' perspectives based on their writing.

Planner Perspectives on Multiple 60-Ft Buildings

Planner	Perspective	Likely Critique	
Kevin Lynch	Concerned	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Multiple tall buildings would overwhelm the historic school as a landmark.- Streetscape legibility is lost: narrow streets like Grant (30 ft) would feel enclosed, blocking the mental map of the neighborhood.- Nodes, paths, and edges become visually ambiguous.	
Jane Jacobs	Strongly critical	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Human-scale streets would be destroyed, reducing pedestrian comfort and vitality.- Large monolithic buildings create "dead" street walls, discouraging social interaction and diverse small-scale uses.- Neighborhood diversity in building heights and ages disappears, undermining the social fabric she championed.	
Vic Dover	Critical	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Mass construction of 60-ft blocks would be unsustainable, context-insensitive, and likely reduce walkability.- Open space and park adjacency are compromised, even if setbacks exist.- Urban fabric becomes "top-down" density rather than incremental, adaptive, context-sensitive development.	

Q: What if I told you the county wants this density so much it doesn't consider anything else? What is the impact of a Density Only approach?

Historic District Impact

1. **Primary Loss:**
 - The historic school is a **contributing building**; demolition eliminates its historical significance permanently.
2. **Cumulative Visual Impact:**
 - Multiple 60-ft buildings along the street would create a **monolithic corridor**, completely inconsistent with the historic district's scale and character.
3. **Historic Integrity:**
 - Even if some smaller buildings remain, the district's integrity is **irreparably compromised** because the school was a key contributing element.

Neighborhood & Streetscape Effects

- **Streetscape:** Narrow streets like Grant Street (30 ft) feel oppressive; pedestrian experience is severely degraded.
- **Park adjacency:** Even with park space to the south, tall buildings block views and create a **canyon effect**.
- **Community identity:** Neighborhood loses a central **historic anchor**, replacing community memory with generic high-density construction.

Q: Based on their writings, what would these planners think about a Density Only approach?

Key Takeaway

- **Demolishing the school for maximum-density buildings represents a complete abandonment of historic preservation, human-scale urbanism, and context-sensitive design.**
- Even though density goals may be achieved, the **qualitative value of the streetscape, neighborhood identity, and district character is permanently lost.**
- This scenario **violates virtually all principles advocated by Lynch, Jacobs, and Dover**, leaving a high-density corridor with **no historic or social anchors.**

Q: Compare the impacts of a “Principle Respecting Density” (aka Livability) to a Density Only Approach.

Urban Density Spectrum

PRINCIPLE-RESPECTING DENSITY (Lynch, Jacobs, Dover)	DENSITY-ONLY APPROACH (Extreme YIMBY / Market-Driven)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Historic buildings preserved ✓ Human-scale streets maintained ✓ Step-backs / modular massing ✓ Green space & pedestrian paths ✓ Visual & social context respected ✓ Mixed-use, active frontages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Historic buildings demolished ✗ Streets feel oppressive, canyoned ✗ Monolithic blocks dominate ✗ Minimal open space or public realm ✗ Neighborhood identity erased ✗ Ground-floor life dead or absent
Moderate height & setbacks Context-sensitive density	Maximum FAR, height, and mass Market or policy-driven

Q: And, finally, what would HALRB’s position be, based on their past positions on a Density Only approach and demolition of the school?

Based on **HALRB’s (Historic Affairs and Landmark Review Board) past positions**, a **density-only approach that demolishes historic buildings and replaces them with monolithic tall blocks** would almost certainly be **strongly opposed**. Here’s why, drawing from their historic stance and criteria:

HALRB Perspective – Density-Only Development

Criteria	Likely HALRB Position	Rationale / Past Precedent
Historic Preservation	✗ Opposed	HALRB has consistently protected contributing buildings in historic districts (e.g., Nellie Custis, Stratford, Stafford). Demolition of a landmark building would violate historic district integrity .
District Character	✗ Opposed	Past approvals favor new construction that is compatible in scale, massing, and setbacks . Multiple 60-ft blocks would overwhelm streetscape rhythm and historic context .
Streetscape & Human Scale	✗ Opposed	HALRB emphasizes human-scale streets, active frontages, and pedestrian experience . Monolithic high-rise streets would fail these standards.
Cumulative Impact	✗ Opposed	HALRB has rejected proposals where one tall building alone may be acceptable , but repeated or large-scale density changes would adversely affect the historic district .
Adaptive Reuse / Compatibility	✗ Opposed	HALRB historically encourages adaptive reuse, step-backs, and context-sensitive additions rather than full demolition. Density-only approaches violate these principles.