



AURORA HIGHLANDS CIVIC ASSOCIATION

June 9, 2026

Re: Nellie Custis School Local Historic District

Dear Arlington County Board,

Nellie Custis School is historically significant, suitable for restoration, and worthy of preservation. HALRB determined that the building meets the zoning criteria for Local Historic District designation. Even at the Planning Commission hearing where the Planning Commission opposed the LHD, most commission opposition appeared to be based on process concerns, owner consent, or competing policy priorities rather than a lack of historic merit. Multiple architects and preservation professionals have confirmed that adaptive reuse is feasible.

The question before the County Board is whether Arlington will preserve one of its oldest surviving schools—the first built after Alexandria County became Arlington County 1920—or allow demolition of a recognized historic resource when viable preservation alternatives exist. With \$11 million in proposed County funding and a realistic adaptive reuse option before it, the Board has a duty to achieve both preservation and development rather than treating them as mutually exclusive goals as in the past.

The following comments are provided to clarify issues contained in the Board Report for the Nellie Custis Local Historic District and to follow up on issues raised during the Planning Commission hearing on June 1, 2026 in advance of the County Board hearing June 17, 2026 in support of preservation of the school.

Planning Commission Hearing Discussion Summary

The Planning Commission reviewed the Nellie Custis School Local Historic District (LHD) application on June 1, 2026. However, the Planning Commission's opposition should not be interpreted as a finding that the building lacks historic significance. Most commissioners who opposed the nomination cited process concerns, owner consent issues, or competing policy priorities rather than a failure to meet the zoning criteria for designation.

1. **In Support:** Torres voted in favor, emphasizing that in her professional experience the building could easily be adaptively reused given its existing condition. Ms. Torres also later suggested that Ms. Amodeo (absent for personal reasons) shares this view. Both Ms. Torres and Ms. Amodeo are professional architects, unlike the other commissioners.
2. **Abstain:** Chair Bagley appeared to weigh competing priorities of use versus preservation
3. **Owner consent issue:** Lantelme, recalling the SPRC process which he chaired, noted that the building was recognized as historic at the time and desirable to retain. He said the SPRC explored many ways to retain the building, but owner consent was lacking. (*Importantly, owner consent is a consideration in the SPRC process, but not the LHD process.*)

4. **Process concerns / too late:** Steinberger and Striner stated they did not vote for the LHD because the LHD deliberation followed approval of the Site Plan showing demolition.
 5. **Did not state a clear reason to oppose:** Vice Chair Guevarra
 6. **The new use should be prioritized over preservation:** Johnson (per her Planning Commission CV, Ms. Johnson is a long-time housing advocate.) Even so, Ms. Johnson recognized the value that the Christmas tree lighting ceremony had provided in the past to the community and to her personally (the large tree is being demolished.)
 7. **Not historic:** Peterson, Garcia, Robertson, Patel
-

Historical Significance of Nellie Custis School Planning Commission Discussion & Follow Up

Chair Bagley questioned staff on the school's age ranking, and Ms. Ferris stated it was the "7th oldest school in Arlington". Subsequent research shows the age ranking of the following schools still standing:

Built in what was known as Alexandria County:

- Hume, 1891 (LHD)
- Maury / Clarendon, 1910 (LHD)
- Jefferson (Hoffman-Boston), 1915

Built after Alexandria County became Arlington County in 1920:

- Nellie Custis, 1924 (per recent LHD report)
- Robert E. Lee / Lee Arts Center, 1925

Nellie Custis was the first school constructed after Alexandria County became Arlington County, and remains one of its oldest surviving schools.

Its name honors Eleanor "Nellie" Custis's connection to George Washington, reflecting Arlington's emerging identity as a streetcar suburb of Washington, D.C., distinct from Alexandria. (See Attachment A for Aurora Highlands development history.) **The moment Alexandria County became Arlington County was pivotal in the county's development in recognizing that its identity had shifted away from Alexandria, and via the soon to be re-opened Long Bridge, toward Washington DC.**

While Clarendon is often credited as the first streetcar suburb because it developed into a commercial center, Aurora Highlands was platted in 1896 on the first electric railway route between Del Ray and Long Bridge, four years before Clarendon was established. Clarendon subsequently lost much of its historic character to the Clarendon sector plan development, while other historic streetcar suburbs, Maywood, Del Ray, Aurora Highlands, Lyon Park and Lyon Village continue to exist, with only Maywood protected through Local Historic District designation. The rest are under pressure to develop without comparable protection.

Recognizing the development pressures facing Aurora Highlands, similar neighborhoods (among others) like Ashton Heights, Lyon Park and Lyon Village Civic Associations have voiced support for the Nellie Custis Local Historic District.

The County should consider consistency in its preservation decisions. Hume and Maury Schools are protected historic resources. If affordable housing is prioritized, it is reasonable to ask why those sites have been preserved while Nellie Custis is slated for demolition? Arlington has repeatedly recognized the public value of preserving historic schools, even when they are no longer used as schools. Nellie Custis School and the historic Aurora Highlands community deserve the same consideration as others.

Additionally, the land for the school was donated under a deed restriction for school purposes, anchoring the developing surrounding residential community. Nellie Custis remains the only surviving historic civic building in Aurora Highlands. The school was an early commission of Upman & Adams, architects who later designed major DC-area buildings.

HALRB Review Discussion and Vote to Approve Clarifications to the Board Report

The HALRB first voted in June, 2024 to commission a study for the Local Historic District because it reviewed the zoning criteria and agreed that the building met the minimum of 2 of the 11 zoning criteria for a Local Historic District at the time.

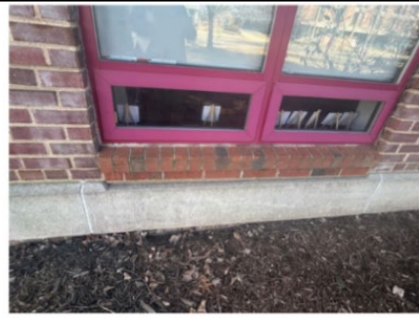
Ten of the twelve HALRB members agreed and reaffirmed during their March 18, 2026 discussion that, in addition to being a contributing building to the National Register Aurora Highlands Historic District (zoning criteria a), the building was suitable for restoration (zoning criteria k). **Even some that did not vote for the LHD for other reasons stated they agreed it met the two required criteria.**

The majority that voted in favor of the LHD cited the building's role as a school / educational facility for over 100 years (zoning criteria b), design by Upman & Adams (criteria f), and its status as a familiar visual feature along 23rd Street (criteria h). Ultimately, the HALRB voted to approve the LHD 7-4-1.

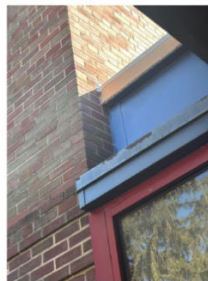
Suitable for Restoration Clarifications to the Board Report

Nellie Custis School meets the criteria for preservation based on both its historical significance and suitability for restoration. It is in suitable for restoration as observed by Ms. Torres, 10 members of HARLB, thousands of individuals represented in letters written to the county, and per the Aurora Highlands Civic Association March 17, 2026 letter to the HALRB which included a survey of the condition of the building and examples of similar projects (Attachment B). The building requires restoration of doors and windows in the original existing masonry openings. The form of the historic building is readable, and the brick is in excellent condition. The later additions were "tacked on" and can be easily removed.

The Board Report made many claims about the condition of the building, but provided no survey and only showed distant photographs obscured by landscaping on the front and side. The Board Report claims the windows were widened but offers no proof of that. The original brick return is visible on the sides of the windows; the original sills are in place as the new windows were installed within the original opening. Windows and doors as it typical in restoration can be easily returned to the historic design. A picture is worth 1000 words:



New sill was built within the original opening & new window installed within the original opening (typical)



2) Detail of addition meeting 1932 exterior wall. New materials butt into the wall with a caulk joint, allowing easy removal and preservation / restoration of the original wall.

\$11 M Funding – Conditional and Actionable Leverage toward Community Harmony

As of May, 2026, we understand Arlington County is proposing \$11 million in funding toward this project without which it would not be financially viable, and that this funding is conditioned on some future approval of a development plan. **This funding is new leverage the County has now that it did not have during the SPRC process (per Commissioner Lantelme’s concerns) and can now use to require and support the adaptive reuse of the historic building, achieving a solution that satisfies the community, neighbors, and the property owner.**

AHCA previously provided an “Alternative Envelope” concept envisioning 60,000–80,000 SF of development. This plan respects the 35-foot historic district viewshed height, loads off 23rd Street, buffers the park with heavy evergreen trees, and restores the historic 1924–1932 portions of the school and mature landscaping. Implementing this envelope is consistent with HALRB’s vision for adaptive reuse (Attachment C). **Given that the new funding is tied to plan approval, this envelope could reasonably be incorporated as a condition of funding.**

Commissioners including Garcia, Striner, Bagley, Steinberger, Patel, Lantelme, and Torres emphasized the importance of community harmony at the Planning Commission hearing. With \$11 million in new public funding, the County has an opportunity to foster a **development outcome that balances historic**

preservation, neighborhood character and community interests. Implementing the Alternative Envelope with the LHD represents a balanced outcome.

Property Owner Consent Discussion / Clarifications to the Board Report

Matt Mattauszek, the staff planner in charge of the Special GLUP process advised AHCA in its February, 2024 meeting that the Special GLUP Process that led to the approved Site Plan only considers options that the applicant (Melwood) approves. Commissioner Lantelme reiterated this point in the recent Planning Commissioning hearing, saying there was no way to require Melwood to preserve the building in that upzoning process. It was after we learned this constraint from Mr. Mattauszek, and learned about the Local Historic District process, that the civic association voted to support the LHD, in order to provide the County with a mechanism to pursue preservation of this historic community resource not otherwise available.

Per the zoning ordinance, the LHD does not require property owner support, or consent. This is intentional and reflects the longstanding principle that historic preservation decisions are made independently, in the public interest, even where private development interests may conflict with preservation goals.

There are examples of other LHDs in Arlington where some property owners opposed designation at the time, including the high-profile Maywood Historic District.

Importantly, Melwood is not a typical private property owner. When Melwood acquired the property, the site retained public land use and there was no likely redevelopment potential that could require demolition of the historic structure. It was only after Arlington County approved or signaled support for land use and zoning changes requested by Melwood that demolition became financially advantageous and preservation concerns became urgent prompting the LHD nomination.

The property was not even purchased by Melwood or its predecessors; rather, this 80,000-sf property with a fully operational school on it was traded for a 7000-sf lot with a garage. This uneven exchange occurred under the constraint of the public use restriction on the school to even out the swap. Later, no payment was made by Melwood to the County for the increase in land value as a result of the 2025 upzoning from 4.5M to 7M.

As approved, Melwood could convert the entire building to market-rate apartments in 30 years and refinance the tax-credit equity after 15 years. Melwood would then have traded what was originally a 7,000-square-foot garage lot worth perhaps \$1 million in today's dollars, for 105 market-rate apartments worth more than \$50 million in today's dollars paid for by taxpayer-funding, and over the opposition of the community.

The central point is that nothing can proceed without County approval and financial participation, which makes the argument that Melwood's consent should govern preservation decisions less relevant even if consent is not required under the LHD process. **The County is now a financial partner and needs to do the right thing and insist on a building that is in scale with the historic district, buffers the park,**

preserves the building, loads off 23rd Street, provides adequate parking and positions hazards such as car exhaust and transformers away from the children’s playground.

Historical Significance Timeframe Clarifications to the Board Report

The Board Report claims HALRB tasked staff to study the whole site; however, the LHD applicant did not request this. Notes submitted June 17, 2024 by the applicant, identified only the **1924–1932 historically significant portion** for preservation within a development plan approved by AHCA in May 2024.

<https://aurorahighlands.org/wp-content/uploads/Nellie-Custis-LHD-Letter-to-HALRB-3.pdf>

While preserving the whole site as a school would be welcome by AHCA to help address the ongoing school overcrowding at Oakridge Elementary, the civic association supported a development alternative that allowed adaptive reuse of only the historic portion of the school **as a compromise**. HALRB in their approval imposed the 1924–1932 timeframe on the LHD as well in an effort to balance development with preservation.

When asked about partial preservation of the site at the Planning Commission hearing, Ms. Ferris acknowledged that similar partial preservation has been done many times in Arlington. Contrary to the Board Report, it does not have to be all or nothing

Process Issues: Planning Commission Discussion and Board Report Clarifications

We agree with Commissioners Steinberger, Lantelme and Striner that the SPRC review process was flawed in terms of historic review. However, as Chair Bagley observed, both the county and the developer were fully aware that the school was under historic consideration at the time the SPRC reviewed the project.

While the County approved the Site Plan before HALRB review of the LHD, **this timing issue is not a justification for demolition**. Critiques of the process are valid, but these procedural flaws do not erase historic value as defined by the zoning code. Further, modifications to plans are routinely feasible at this stage of design. Surveys, environmental studies, and civil engineering work and standard detailing and setup remain useful and can be retained. **It is far from too late to do the right thing and preserve this building.**

The Board Report omits the February 3, 2025 letter from HALRB to the County Board warning of the conflict created by the County when advancing the GLUP and zoning amendments while the LHD review process was still ongoing. HALRB expressed concerns regarding the County’s decision to proceed with upzoning before completion of the historic review process.

The Board Report’s assertion that designation “would undermine the extensive community engagement process undertaken by the GLUP study” is misleading because it relies on circular reasoning, given that most of the members of the surrounding community opposed the GLUP upzoning proposal for many

reasons, including the demolition of Nelly Custis School. This was evidenced in the surveys conducted, the votes taken by AHCA, and letters submitted by the community at the time.

The Board Report's reliance on the prior zoning approval as justification for denying historic protections is inconsistent with the County Board's position that the historic review process is separate and independent. Accordingly, that rationale should be dismissed.

Community Support and Expert Endorsement

Support for saving Nellie Custis School is broad and cross-cutting:

1. **HALRB:** voted 7 to 4 to approve. Support included all four past HALRB chairs representing decades of leadership. 10 of 12 agreed the building is suitable for restoration.
 2. **Professional expertise:** Planning Commission architects Torres and Amodeo support adaptive reuse; urban planner Commissioner Lantelme confirms previous efforts to preserve the building had no leverage, which is no longer the case
 3. **Past leaders:** Former Planning Commission Chair Ted Saks sent a letter of support;
 4. **Civic associations and other organization** Ashton Heights, Aurora Highlands, Bellvue Forest, GlenCarlyn, Leeway Overlee, Lyon Park, Lyon Village, Shirlington, Arlington Civic Federation, Arlington Tree Connection, Louis Papas Trust (23rd Street Retail), and Save Historic Arlington have sent letters urging preservation.
 5. **Local residents:** 50+ letters sent from individuals in the community in favor (2 against) – consistent with previous votes and surveys from the community.
 6. **Public petitions:** Over 270 signatures on change.org
-

Summary and Request

Four Aurora Highlands presidents have raised concerns about this project since 2021. Despite extensive community participation, the Site Plan approvals did not incorporate requested changes. At the same time, little of the “disabled set asides” that Melwood touted as making it special came to fruition. There are no set-asides, only marketing to the disabled for 60 days for four units in the site plan conditions.

The HALRB has recommended LHD approval. Importantly, the County now has both **formal preservation findings and a funding vehicle conditioned on project approval**, creating a unique opportunity to align development with preservation outcomes.

Overruling the HALRB, the board tasked with review, would set a troubling precedent. The County now has the opportunity—and \$11 million in leverage—to preserve a historic building while supporting development.

We respectfully urge the County Board to:

1. Approve the Local Historic District designation for Nellie Custis School.

2. Incorporate the Alternative Envelope plan as a condition of the \$11 million funding participation.

This approach safeguards a vital historic resource, honors community input, and ensures a balanced, responsible development outcome. We hope the Board will seize this opportunity.

Thank you for your consideration.

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

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

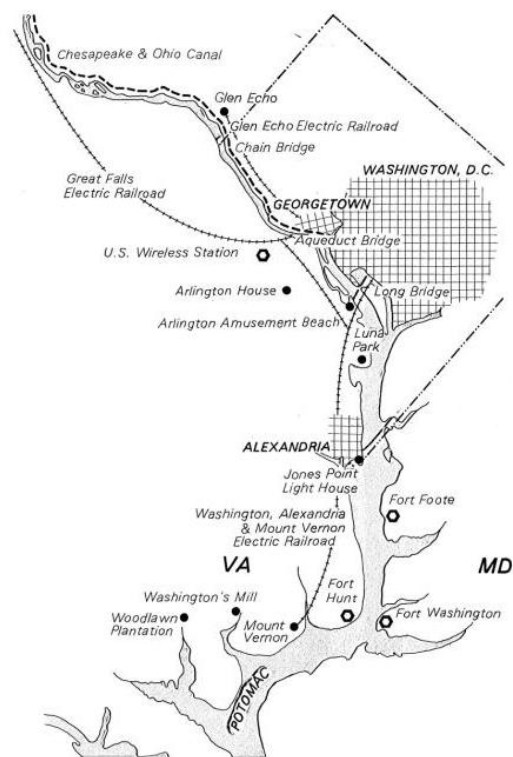
Cc: Aurora Highlands Civic Association Board

ATTACHMENT A – NELLIE CUSTIS SCHOOL AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AURORA HIGHLANDS STREETCAR SUBURB

In the late nineteenth century, the area now known as Aurora Highlands was still largely rural and part of **Alexandria County**. The landscape consisted of farms, open fields, and scattered estates located on the high ground between **Alexandria** and **Washington**. Although close to the nation's capital, the area remained sparsely populated because transportation options were limited.

That changed in the 1890s with the arrival of the **Washington, Alexandria and Mount Vernon Electric Railway**. The electric railway connected Mount Vernon, Alexandria, Del Ray, Arlington, and Washington. After crossing Four Mile Run from Alexandria, the line followed the route of the old Alexandria Canal through what is now the Eads Street corridor before crossing the Potomac via the Long Bridge into Washington. The railway made daily commuting practical and transformed nearby farmland into valuable suburban real estate.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Virginia_trolleys



The original electric streetcar, the Washington Alexandria and Mount Vernon railway came first into Arlington in 1872. The line ran from Del Ray “St. Elmo’s Station” to Eads Street “Aurora Hills Station” in Arlington, across the Long Bridge terminating at 12th and Pennsylvania at Federal Triangle. As a result, Aurora Hills and Virginia Highlands were the earliest streetcar suburbs in Arlington in 1896. It was only later that the line was extended into what is now the Rosslyn area, and Maywood / Clarendon / Lyon Park and Lyon Village were later established starting in 1900.

Recognizing the opportunity, developers began subdividing large tracts of land into residential neighborhoods. The subdivisions that eventually formed Aurora Highlands included Addison Heights, Virginia Highlands, and Aurora Hills. These developments were marketed to middle-class government workers, clerks, military officers, and professionals employed in Washington. Advertisements emphasized clean air, higher elevations, modern utilities, and convenient streetcar access to downtown Washington.

Aurora Highlands was also among the earliest parts of what would become Arlington County to experience substantial suburban development. Because of its direct location along the streetcar corridor between Alexandria and Washington, it urbanized earlier than many western and more rural portions of the county, which remained sparsely developed into the 1920s and 1930s. This early development helps explain the neighborhood’s strong early-twentieth-century identity compared with other parts of Arlington.

Aurora Highlands was designed primarily as a residential community. Its streets were laid out in a connected grid, lots were relatively modest in size, and homes were within walking distance of streetcar stops. Residents could leave their houses, walk a few minutes to a station, and ride directly to jobs in the capital. A small commercial district developed along what is now 23rd Street South, providing neighborhood-scale retail, services, and businesses for local residents. This pattern was common in streetcar suburbs, where small commercial clusters were often located within walking distance of surrounding homes rather than separated into large shopping centers as would become common in the automobile era.

The streetcar stops serving the area included **Addison Station**, located near present-day 18th Street South and South Eads Street; **Virginia Highlands Station**, near 23rd Street South and South Eads Street; and **Aurora Hills Station**, near 26th Street South and South Eads Street. These stops structured early development and helped anchor the surrounding subdivisions, effectively shaping where residential growth concentrated.

The period from approximately 1910 to 1930 saw particularly rapid growth. Several factors contributed:

1. Washington's population increased dramatically.
2. The federal government expanded before, during, and after **World War I**.
3. Military activities in Northern Virginia became increasingly important.
4. Streetcar service made suburban living practical for thousands of commuters.

By the time of World War I, Aurora Highlands was becoming a fully established suburb rather than merely a speculative real-estate venture.

In 1920, Alexandria County officially became **Arlington County**. The change helped distinguish the county from the neighboring City of Alexandria and reflected the county's increasingly close relationship with Washington. By then, much of the county's economic life was tied to the federal city across the river.

As the population grew, residents demanded schools, churches, and other civic institutions. Developers understood that such amenities were critical to attracting families and increasing property values. In 1923, land was donated for **Nellie Custis School**. The school was named for **Eleanor 'Nelly' Parke Custis Lewis**, whose family was closely connected to the Custis legacy in Arlington and George Washington. The presence of a neighborhood school became an important selling point for the community, helping attract families and enhancing the marketability of houses being built and sold throughout Aurora Highlands.

By the late 1920s, Aurora Highlands had matured into a classic Washington streetcar suburb: a neighborhood of detached homes, tree-lined streets, local businesses along 23rd Street South, churches, **Nellie Custis School**, and direct transit connections to downtown Washington. Residents could meet many of their daily needs within the neighborhood while relying on the streetcar for access to employment and commerce in the nation's capital.

A useful way to understand later change in Arlington is that not all streetcar suburbs evolved the same way. Places like **Del Ray** and parts of North Arlington largely retained their streetcar-suburb form, preserving the relationship between housing, small-scale retail, and neighborhood schools.

Others, especially **Clarendon and Ballston**, saw their original fine-grained, low-rise streetcar-era fabric replaced by mid- and late-twentieth-century redevelopment centered on the Metro system. The underlying street grid and transit orientation remain, but the physical environment now reflects a higher-density, post-automobile and Metro-era pattern rather than the original streetcar suburb structure.

Today, Aurora Highlands reflects a delicate balance between preservation and change. Its early twentieth-century street grid, proximity to the former streetcar corridor, and surviving neighborhood-scale retail along 23rd Street South still preserve the physical logic of its streetcar-suburb origins, even as surrounding redevelopment and regional growth have reshaped its edges. In this context, **Nellie Custis School** plays a particularly important role as a living historic anchor. As the only continuously embedded civic institutions from the neighborhood's early development, it helps preserve the community's original identity as a family-oriented streetcar suburb. Maintaining the school in place is a way of retaining the historical continuity of Aurora Highlands, linking its present-day community life directly to the patterns of growth established more than a century ago.

Attachment B1: Nellie Custis School Façade Survey

The Report omits a survey of the existing building material. The existing historic building is in excellent shape, suitable for restoration, which is a complete, 180-degree departure from the description contained in the Report. The Report includes few photographs of the original building material.

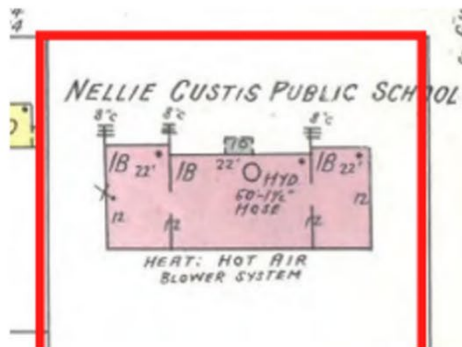
- a. 23rd Street Main Façade: the exterior walls, masonry and trim are preserved completely / nearly completely on the front. Only windows, doors and the front canopy have been replaced – but importantly *these were replaced within the existing original masonry openings*.
- b. Grant Street Main Façade: the second primary façade is in the same condition as the 23rd Street Main Façade, with one new window cut in.
- c. West Non-Street Facing Façade: The 2nd Floor of the West Façade is in the same condition as the 23rd Street Façade. The 1st Floor wall remains behind a one-story addition. The original masonry wall appears to have been parged or drywalled over inside the addition, either of which could be easily removed. The addition generally is “tacked onto” the original building, allowing easy removal and reversion to the original form.
- d. South Non-Street Facing Façade: this is the back of the building. The original roof line and trim and masonry wall is preserved at the 2nd Floor except it appears windows have been bricked in, though the original sill remains. There is a first-floor addition similar to the West Façade. The original masonry wall appears to have been parged or drywalled over inside the addition, either which could be easily removed. The addition is generally “tacked onto” the original building, allowing easy removal and reversion to the original form.

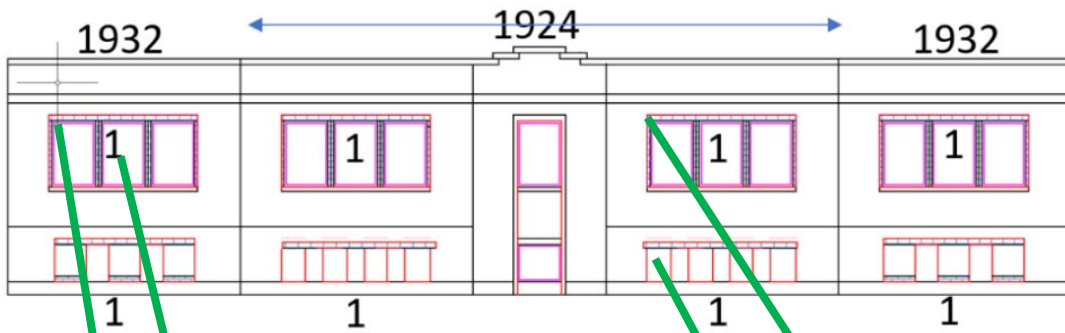
“Compromised integrity” is not even a standard for the Local Historic District. The standard for building condition is clear in 11.3.4.A6(k) “The property is suitable for preservation or restoration”. Preservation and Restoration are technical terms defined in the Secretary of Interior Guidelines and Nellie Custis School is a textbook example of a building that is suitable for “restoration” treatment.

<https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/treatment-standards-restoration.htm#:~:text=Restoration%20is%20the%20treatment%20that,most%20significant%E2%80%944time%20in%20its%20history.>

Nellie Custis School Exterior Façade Survey 750 S. 23rd Street S., Arlington, Virginia

Stacy Meyer, RA, LEED AP
3/3/2026





Sketch of Existing 23rd Street Façade, 3/3/2026

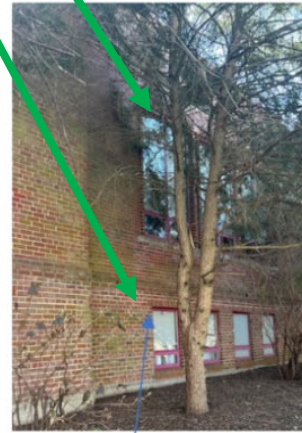
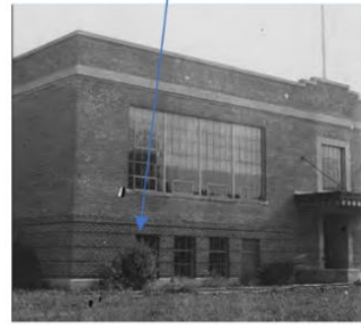


Figure 30: Nelly Custis Elementary School in 1932 after the 1931 expansion. Source: Fire Insurance Survey, 1932, RG 32-7-8-1, Central Library of Arlington County.

1932



1924

NORTH ELEVATION – 23rd STREET

MASONRY & WINDOWS

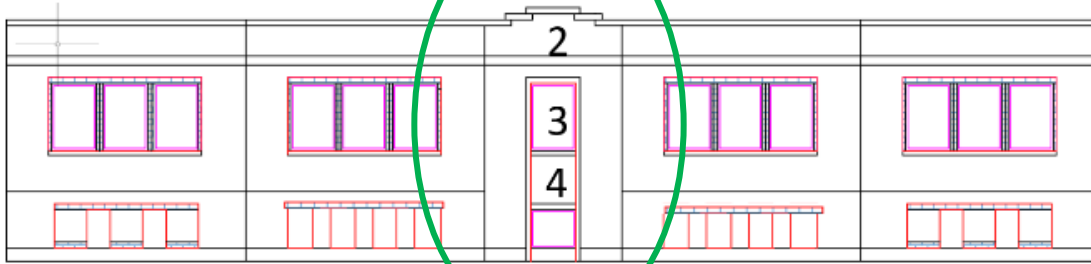
General: original masonry and limestone trim completely in tact and in excellent condition

NOTES

1) Windows all infilled within original masonry openings except header. Original side brickwork and sills in tact.



New sill was built within the original opening & new window installed within the original opening (typical)



1924

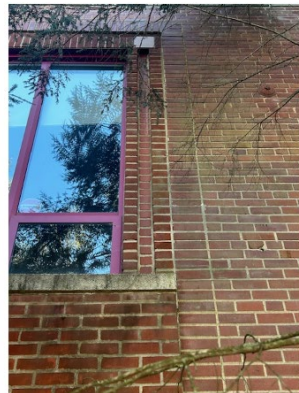


4) Entry canopy missing, limestone trim missing at center portico, and front steps / doors replaced – **new work is inset within the original masonry opening**

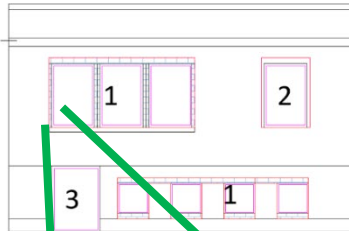


CENTER ENTRY DETAILS

2) Decorative stone top course appears in tact and protected by coping



3) Original brick header & sides surrounds the infill brick header in the center entry opening – work was done within the existing opening. Replacement of the window, trim and canopy is standard



Sketch of Existing Grant Street Façade, 3/3/2026



Figure 30: Nelly Custis Elementary School Insurance Survey, 1932, RG 32-7-8-1, Ce

1932

EAST ELEVATION – GRANT STREET

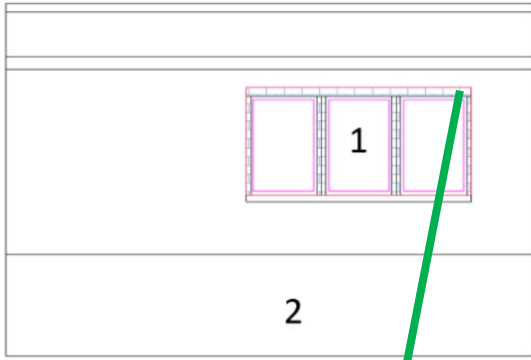
MASONRY & WINDOWS

General: original masonry and limestone trim completely in tact and in excellent condition

NOTES

- 1) Windows all infilled within original masonry openings except header. Original side brickwork and sills in tact.
- 2) New window cut in
- 3) New door in original door location. Original canopy missing





Sketch of Existing West Façade, 3/3/2026



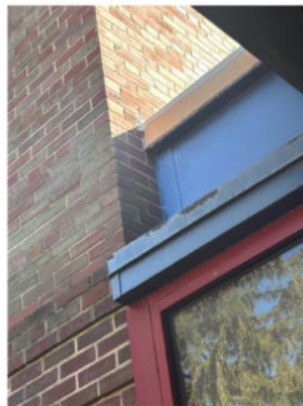
WEST ELEVATION

MASONRY & WINDOWS

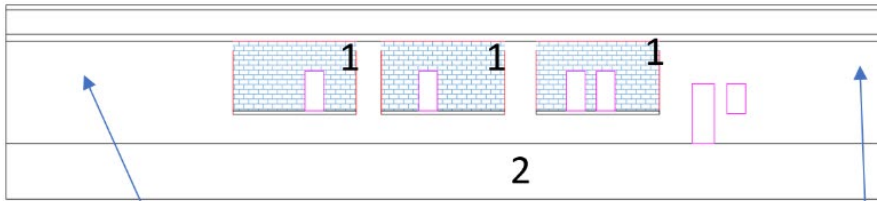
General: original masonry and limestone trim completely in tact and in excellent condition

NOTES

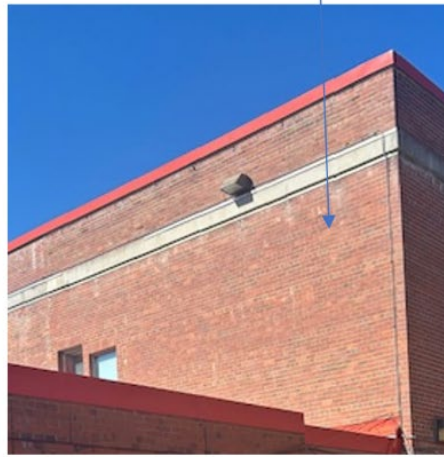
- 1) Windows all infilled within original masonry openings except header. Original side brickwork and sills in tact.
- 2) Later addition butted to to the existing wall – and appears to not be cut in allowing it to be detached without damage.
- 3) Historic brick wall at addition interior appears to be in tact and parged / drywall furring. Either should be able to be easily removed for restoration / preservation.



2) Detail of addition meeting 1932 exterior wall. New materials butt into the wall with a caulk joint, allowing easy removal and preservation / restoration of the original wall.



Sketch of Existing South Façade, 3/3/2026



SOUTH / REAR ELEVATION

MASONRY & WINDOWS

General: original masonry and limestone trim completely in tact and in excellent condition

- 1) It appears 2 - 3 windows were infilled with brick. The original sills remain.
- 2) Later addition attached to the existing wall – and appears to butt to the existing wall allowing it to be detached without damage.
- 3) Historic brick wall at addition interior appears to be in tact and parged / drywall furring. Either should be able to be easily removed for restoration / preservation



2) The brick in the addition is for the most part cut around / butted to the original brick and limestone trim, making the addition removable for restoration / preservation.

Attachment B2 - Selected Case Studies Adaptive Reuse & Restoration

1. Selected examples of Restoration from the NPS.
2. The Langston Slater Schools in DC. The condition of these schools is significantly worse than Nellie Custis as they have some structural damage in addition to fixture replacement. The schools are being planned to be **restored, adaptively reused as affordable housing. This is a model project as to what the county should require at Nellie Custis School.**
3. The Condominiums at Terrell Place. The condition of these **buildings was in markedly worse shape than Nellie Custis School – the entire copper first floor storefront required replacement,** a non-historic building removed, windows, parging, brickwork, roof, etc. were replaced including structural elements. These buildings had significantly less historic material, and were less well known than Nellie Custis. And yet, the project won an award for used of historic resources from the AIA when **restored.**
4. The adaptive reuse of Garfinkel’s department store – the building was in good shape, **but windows, doors, entry and notable a canopy were replaced, similar to Nellie Custis.**

Notably, none of these examples are in Arlington, which chooses to demolish historic buildings despite being in the bullseye of all of America’s history, here in Aurora Highlands. Items 2 -4 were projects I managed, if there are additional questions.

National Park Service Examples of Restoration Treatment

[4] (a) Over the years terra-cotta cladding had been replaced on the lower floors of this early 20th century bank building with a storefront and incompatible windows. (b) A 1936 photograph of the building provided the documentation to restore its historic appearance. (c) Glass fiber reinforced plastic (GFRP) was chosen as a substitute material, and samples were made in a variety of colors and textures to obtain the best match for the missing and damaged terra cotta. (d) This photo taken after restoration shows that the GFRP replacements successfully blend in with the original terra cotta. Photo (d): Blamonet at English Wikipedia.



The first floor of this building needed significant restoration – the original arched masonry openings were rebuilt.



[1] (a) When it was acquired by the National Trust for Historic Preservation in the 1980s, Montpelier in Montpelier Station, VA, the home of James and Dolley Madison, had been much altered and enlarged since it was first constructed. Based on historical documentation and research, Montpelier was accurately restored to its 1820s appearance when the president and his wife lived there (b). Photos: Courtesy of The Montpelier Foundation.



The wings of Montpelier were reduced from two stories to one story in this large restoration.

The Langston Slater School
33 – 45 P Street, NW Washington DC
Deputy Mayor Planning & Economic Development, Washington DC
Adaptive Reuse / Affordable Housing 2020 - ongoing

ADAPTIVE REUSE & RESTORATION

Disposition of **the Langston Slater Schools for adaptive reuse for affordable housing**. The buildings need a significant amount of work which will be funded by Historic Preservation Tax Credits. The plan is to do adaptive reuse of the school buildings for affordable apartments and infill between them with a new small building (same height) for affordable condominiums.

The windows, roof, canopies and entry bases will require replacement, and the façade, repair. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, 2013.



**The Condominiums at Terrell Place, 675 E Street, NW, Washington, DC
CarrAmerica Development, Inc.**

Adaptive Reuse / Condominium, 60K Square Feet, 2001 – 2004

“2004 Excellence in Construction Award” from the Metro Washington and Virginia Chapters of Associated Builders and Contractors.

“2004 Award of Merit for Historic Resources” from the Washington, DC, AIA

ADAPTIVE REUSE & RESTORATION

Adaptive reuse of bank / retail buildings for a condominium in downtown Washington, DC. The existing site contained three structures whose historic fabric had to be maintained intact. A fourth building, a connecting building, which was not historic was demolished. Two of the historic structures were typical brownstone / brick row houses dating from the late 19th Century. The third structure was an historic bank building, dating from the mid-19th Century and had a cast iron and stucco façade. The bank building was attached to the row houses via a new connecting lobby finished in maple and travertine, with a custom curtain wall elevator tower. In the Downtown Historic District.

Architect: Smith Group with Historic Preservation Mary Oehrlein

All windows were replaced; the first-floor copper canopy was rebuilt. The façades all required major repair and parging.



**Hamilton Square,
600 14th Street, NW, Washington DC
CarrAmerica Development, Inc.**

Adaptive Reuse / Office, 250K Square Feet, 1998 – 2000

“Renovation of the Year, 1999” Greater Washington Association of Realtors

“Renovation of the Year, 1998” Washington Business Journal

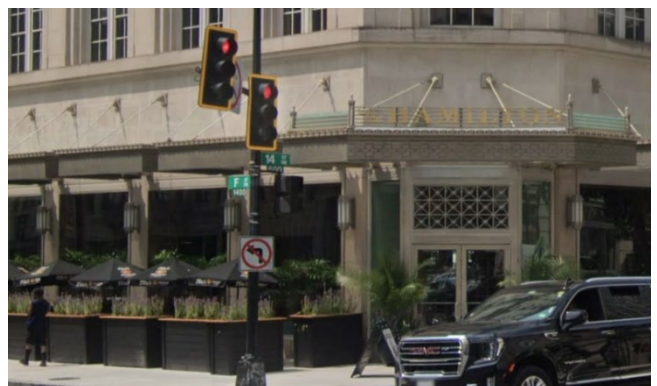
ADAPTIVE REUSE & RESTORATION

Adaptive reuse of retail and reuse as a trophy office building in downtown, Washington, DC, one block from the White House.

The existing building previously housed Garfinkle’s department store. The masonry façade and first bay of structure were kept in-tact, but the core of the building was rebuilt. In the Financial Historic District.

Architect: SOM

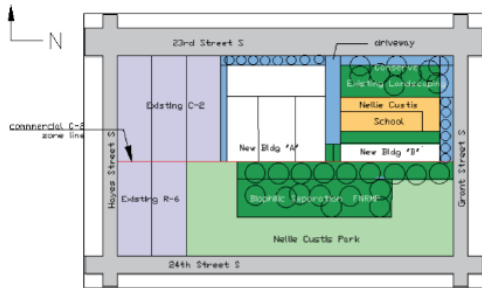
The canopy, windows and doors were replaced.



Attachment C - Aurora Highland Civic Association Proposed Envelope

The Appropriate Size Envelope Is About Half the Size of the Proposal

Given that neither alternative in the Study provided an appropriate development envelope, we worked backwards – we asked, given the site constraints of the park separation, height limitation, tree canopy requirements, etc., what would the appropriate size of a development on this site look like? Assumptions below:



CALCULATIONS

NELLIE CUSTIS SCHOOL

Nellie Custis School approx: 7100 SF x 2 stories = 14,200 SF.
Add 1 story penthouse 2:1 setback 3000 SF = 17,700 SF.

NEW BUILDING A

Use ground floor for Melwood program, 21,500 SF
Upper (2) floors approx 15,000 SF x 2 = 30,000 SF (Letter "U" shape) – step down as required to meet 35' ht. limit.

NEW BUILDING B

SE building 30' = 3 stories x 3900 SF = 11,700 SF

Total ~80K SF

- require a 35' height limit,
- preserve the historic Nellie Custis School building and mature landscaping,
- manage all parking on site, and loading off 23rd Street
- Include driveways for fire access, loading and trash
- require heavy evergreen continuous biophilic separation between the proposed building and Nelly Custis Park in line with the existing R-6/C-2 demarcation line,
- require measurable and maximum light and noise pollution reduction measures,
- require adequate open space to support well being of residents and,
- provide a 10' setback at the west side.

The plan diagram view to the left is an **example** of a layout that includes all of the required assumptions for the site. The appropriate maximum sized development for this site is approximately 80K SF, just over half of the 145K SF proposed.